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WHAT THE ANN ARBOR BIBLE CHAIRS ARE

The Ann Arbor Bible Chairs, under whose auspices these studies are offered, were established thirteen years ago for the purpose of promoting systematic and devotional Bible study among university students and others. The work was undertaken with the firm conviction that university students ought to be afforded an opportunity to receive Bible instruction of University grade. The instructors are G. P. Coler and A. C. Gray. More than two thousand students of the University of Michigan have already availed of this instruction.

WHAT BIBLE CHAIR EXTENSION IS

Bible Chair Extension is a department of the Ann Arbor Bible Chairs that has for its object the promotion of systematic and devotional Bible study and of better Bible teaching in the home and in the Sunday school. Many Endeavorers and other busy people who read their Bibles regularly and conscientiously have nothing at the end of the year to show for the time thus spent. This kind of Bible reading is not very inspiring; yet it is the best that many busy and earnest Christian people can do when left to themselves. Most of us need some kindly direction till we have formed right habits of systematic reading and study, and of retaining and appropriating something of what we read. To furnish help of this kind for busy people is the one great purpose of Bible Chair Extension. Studies in the life of Christ have already been taken by nearly seven thousand non-residents. Other courses are now in preparation. Full particulars will be sent on application. Address,

G. P. COLER, Ann Arbor, Mich.

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE HEBREW PEOPLE

STUDIES IN THE BOOK OF GENESIS

By G. P. COLER

"While all the world besides was sunk in political slavery, the noblest ideas of liberty found a home in the pages of Scripture. In antiquity these fostered a magnificent spirit of national independence which made the Jew invincible; for though he might be overpowered, he never submitted. In every age since, they have kindled the virtues of manhood in land after land; for the noblest inspirations of freedom have ever been found among the populations which have drunk in most of the spirit of the Bible. It has been the charter of human rights from the remotest ages, and it still silently protests against every social injustice and oppression. Even in Genesis the lesson is emphatically taught that all men are equal before God, and that true dignity consists not in mere outward rank of illustrious birth, but in the higher qualities of the intellect and of the heart.—*Geikie.*"

PUBLISHED BY THE
ANN ARBOR BIBLE CHAIRS
Ann Arbor, Mich.

Send all requests for information and all orders for the studies to
G. P. COLER, Ann Arbor, Mich.

THE PURPOSE OF THESE STUDIES

These studies consist for the most part of selections from lecture notes that have been used in student classes. Many students have expressed a wish that they could have the studies in printed form. It is hoped that many besides students may find them helpful. Their purpose is:

1. To indicate for busy people a few important facts and thoughts concerning the purpose and nature of the Bible, and thus to aid in the formation of right conceptions of what the Bible is and of what our attitude toward it and our use of it should be.
2. To aid busy people in learning and in interpreting the leading facts and teachings of the Book of Genesis, and thus to indicate and illustrate a fruitful method of Old Testament study.

Bibliography

Every home ought to have a Bible Dictionary. The best single book to use in the study of Genesis is The Book of Genesis by Marcus Dods. The price is \$1.50. It is a fine work and ought to be in every church library as one of the Bible study helps. Moulton's Genesis, in the Modern Reader's Bible, is valuable for its introduction and notes. The introduction is especially suggestive. The price is 60 cts. The Temple Bible (60 cents per volume) has a volume on Genesis, containing an introduction by Professor Sayce that is of very great value. This volume also contains notes, maps, and tables that are very helpful. Marcus Dods has a small Commentary on Genesis that is very convenient for reference. It will cost about 75 cents. The first volume each of Geikie's Hours with the Bible, Edersheim's Bible History, Errett's Evenings with the Bible, and Stanley's History of the Jewish Church, are excellent for reference in connection with the study of Genesis. The first ten chapters of Smith's Old Testament History may often be consulted with great advantage.

For the study of the characters of Genesis, Deane's Life and Times of Abraham, and Rawlinson's Isaac and Jacob are very desirable. They are of the men of the Bible series, and cost 75 cts. each. Two books by F. B. Meyer, — Abraham: or the Obedience of Faith; and Israel: A Prince With God, are of great worth because of the spiritual insight and the author's power in expository interpretation. They are excellent supplements to the Men of the Bible series. Representative Men of the Bible, by Dr. George Matheson, contains fine studies of the characters of Genesis. For young boys, Joseph the Ruler, by Royer, is strongly recommended. Many boys will read this little book with a relish. It belongs to a series of small books on Bible heroes, that are published at 35 cts. each. Such books ought to be in Sunday School libraries.

How God Inspired the Bible, by Smyth, is a suggestive book for Sunday school teachers.

FIRST STUDY

WHAT THE BIBLE IS

Memorize: 2 Tim. 3: 16-17; Heb. 1: 1-2; 2 Pét. 1: 21; John 20: 30-31.

We are in danger of coming to the study of the Bible with wrong ideas concerning what the Bible is in its origin, its nature, its purpose, its method, and its theme. Hampered by any one or more of these wrong conceptions, we are almost certain to be misled in our attitude toward the Bible as a whole, and to be wrong in our interpretation and application of some of its contents. It is true that much good may result from Bible study in spite of failure rightly to understand what the Bible is. But the highest and best results for ourselves and for those whom we seek to instruct cannot be attained as long as we hold these wrong conceptions concerning the Bible. Especially do we need to have intelligent and correct ideas about the Bible when we undertake to defend it, or to win others to Christ. With wrong views concerning what the Bible is, we are always in danger of misleading inquiring minds and of failing to win some to Christ who might otherwise become Christians. Bishop Westcott has said; "It is hard to say whether Holy Scripture is more injured by those who assail it or by those who defend it." *It is safe to assert that probably nine-tenths of the honest opposition and indifference to the Bible, results from not clearly understanding what the Bible claims to be and from not clearly recognizing that it is what it claims to be.* It is, therefore, very important that parents, Sunday school teachers, and other Christian workers shall take time to consider the facts and thoughts that are presented in this study.

1. THE BIBLE IS NOT A BOOK, BUT A LIBRARY OF SIXTY-SIX BOOKS

1. This library was not let down from heaven, printed and bound as we now have it; but it was written

by men, book at a time, each book coming at the time when it was needed and when the world was prepared to receive it. The Bible was not therefore suddenly and mysteriously given to the world. It is not "a communication from on high, let down from the skies." It is a literature of gradual growth. Its writers lived at different times in the sixteen centuries that extended from the time of Moses, about 1500 B. C. to the close of the first century A. D.

2. It has been customary since the fourth century A. D. to speak of the Bible as a book, or "the Book." It is probable that this custom will always prevail, for there is a principle of unity running through these sixty-six books that justifies us in regarding them as one book. But when we study and teach the Bible, we must recognize that each book is complete within itself and that it was written to meet some special and pressing need.

3. It has been thought by some that the earliest books of the Bible are the oldest books in the world and that the Hebrew language in which most of the Old Testament was written, is the oldest language in the world; but no book or part of the Bible is the oldest literature in the world. We have learned through modern research in Oriental lands that there were great libraries of books before any book of the Bible was written or compiled,—even before the time of Abraham, 2000 B. C.

Nor was any part of the Bible written in the oldest language of the world. A study of Hebrew shows that it was not the primitive language as some have imagined. Many languages existed side by side with the Hebrew at the time of Moses and many other languages had at that time become dead languages—that is, they were no longer

used in speaking and in writing. We can never know what was the primitive language of the world.

4. While the Bible is a library of gradual growth, written by men who were largely unconscious of the part they were contributing toward the world's greatest and best literature, it is not a jumble of unrelated books, but an organic whole, a body of literature that grew up in accordance with a great underlying purpose. This underlying purpose gives it a distinct principle of unity; and it has natural lines of cleavage which divide and subdivide it into important divisions, each with its own characteristics and purpose.

5. The Bible is a literature of life, and not a narrative of abstract principles, or a mere chronicle of events. It is not a systematic treatise on theology, or a collection of systematized texts or moral precepts. Its books fairly throb with life, and are constantly dealing with problems pertaining to human life as it has been, as it is, and as it ought to be. Its pages abound in concrete facts—facts about the lives of men and women, and about God as He seeks to lift these men and women upward toward Himself.

II. THE BIBLE CONTAINS A REVELATION FROM GOD.

2 Pet. 1: 21; Heb. 1: 1-2; 2 Tim. 3: 16-17.

1. This revelation is from God to man *through man*. It consists of two great parts—the Old Testament and the New Testament.

2. Both the Old Testament and the New are fragmentary in the revelation they make. They consist of facts and truths about life and about God that have been selected by inspired men from a great abundance of material. See Heb. 1: 1-2; John 20: 30-31.

3. The Old Testament and the New are not two

distinct revelations, but supplemental parts of one progressive revelation. Ambrose, a great Christian scholar who lived about 400 A. D., indicated this supplemental relation of the two great natural divisions of the Bible in the following suggestive couplet:

“The New Testament lies in the Old concealed,
The Old Testament stands in the New revealed.”

4. The Bible is not God's *only* revelation, but it is God's *special* revelation to man. God reveals himself to all men through nature. See Psalm 19: 1; Acts 14: 17, and Rom. 1:20. But the Bible is a *fuller* and *more hopeful* revelation than nature can give. It supplements natural revelation:

(1). By supplying some needed moral and spiritual truths that might ultimately be discovered by man, but that could not be deferred without jeopardizing the well-being of many.

(2). By supplying other needful moral and spiritual truths that could never be discovered by unaided human reason.

(3). By supplying more adequately than nature can do the needful *motive* to live a godly life.

(4). By repeating with needful frequency, and emphasizing with adequate forcefulness, things human and divine.

But while the Bible is not God's *only* revelation, we are justified in concluding that it is His *final* supernatural revelation to men. The Old Testament everywhere has marks of incompleteness and points forward to a fuller and a perfect revelation of God's will; while the New Testament has every indication of containing in Christ a perfect, and therefore a *final* revelation of God's purpose and love for man.

4. The Bible in its origin is not wholly divine nor wholly human, but *both divine and human*.

The Bible's own account of itself recognizes both the human and the divine. See 2 Pet. 1: 21; Heb. 1: 1-2; 2 Sam. 23: 2; Acts 1: 16; Is. 1: 10; Jer. 1: 4; Ezek. 1: 3; Micah 1: 1; Zeph. 1: 1; and many other passages. See also 2 Cor. 4: 7, where Paul says that "we have this treasure in earthen vessels." What Paul here says concerning the gospel of Christ is equally true of the whole Bible.

This fact, that the Bible has a human side as well as a divine side—that its books were written by men, and copied, collected, translated, and transmitted by men, and that Bible chronology is left to uninspired scholarship, should always be remembered by Bible students. We should also remember that the Bible recognizes but one perfect man; that excepting Jesus of Nazareth, the Bible characters were human as we are human. The writers of the Bible were indeed divinely inspired men—"holy men of God," who "spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1: 21); but they were still *only men*,—and were subject to like passions as we are, liable to be overtaken in temptation, and *without supernatural knowledge and guidance in things not essential to the message they were inspired to give*.

In some instances, we clearly recognize the frailties of men who were supernaturally used of God in giving a revelation of His purpose and love to us. Thus we are all ready to say that Noah in getting drunk, Abraham in telling a falsehood about his wife, Moses in smiting the rock, and Peter in denying his Master, were wrong and that God cannot approve these things. In the first chapter of Judges, we are, or ought to be, shocked at the cruel treatment of Adoni-bezek. But we need not con-

clude that the children of Israel were commanded of God to do these cruel things. God is not responsible for all the acts of men whom He may use in war any more than the President of the United States is necessarily responsible and censurable for all the wrong conduct of officers and soldiers in our army. The Bible records the polygamy of Abraham and Jacob; the rash vow of Jephtha; the worldliness and sensuality of David before his repentance (Psa. 51), and later the like vices of Solomon; it also records the treachery of Judas, and other weaknesses of Bible characters,—*but it does not commend these things*. On the contrary, they are recorded that we may be warned against them.

It is not needful that we should always be able to indicate with certainty, or to agree with one another upon the line of exact separation between the divine and the human in Bible narrative. The supernatural need not always be so marked or so labeled that it can be instantly and indisputably recognized. It may blend imperceptibly with the natural in revelation just as education and heredity blend in determining character and destiny.

For instance, we read in the twelfth chapter of Genesis that Abraham, after being called of God, went from Canaan into Egypt. Did he go of his own accord, and, perhaps, contrary to the will of God, or did he go because God commanded him to do so? Here there is, and may justly be, difference of opinion. So, too, in the first chapter of Acts, we cannot be certain whether the choice of Matthias was divinely commanded, or whether it was the result of the impulsiveness of Peter. But while it is not possible always to distinguish between the divine and the human in the Bible, it is possible to distinguish these in all *needful places*.

III. THE PURPOSE OF THE BIBLE.

The purpose that a book was intended to serve must be known before we can rightly interpret, appreciate, and apply what is recorded in it. A careful study of the Bible will show us:

1. That its books were not written to gratify curiosity. Yet it is for this purpose that many people use the Bible. They want to know where Cain got his wife or to get an answer to other questions that are equally without answer and without character-forming value.

2. That it is not the purpose of the Bible to teach science, philosophy, ethics, or theology. If this had been its purpose, much more space would have been devoted to the account of creation and to the origin and nature of life and of good and evil. But the Bible does not make known scientific, or philosophic truth. It does not give a systematic doctrine of God. It does not attempt to prove the existence of God; nor does it attempt to explain the origin and purpose of evil. Its purpose is rather to warn against evil and to indicate ways whereby evil may be overcome. Its message is: "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."—Rom. 12: 21.

3. That it is not the purpose of the Bible to teach biography or history.

The Bible contains biographical and historical facts that are of much interest, but it gives these facts, not for the sake of teaching the facts, but for another and a far greater purpose.

What then is the purpose of these sixty-six books that we call the Bible?

THE ONE GREAT PURPOSE OF THE BIBLE

The one great purpose of the Bible from beginning to end is to teach moral and religious truth, and to

exert moral and religious influence; and thus to promote moral and religious life. This means that the Bible is a literature of *power* rather than a literature of *knowledge*. It contains knowledge that is of the highest value. But the purpose in giving this knowledge is to *influence* men and women to choose the highest life, rather than to *inform* them for the sake of their intellectual development. The truths the Bible announces, the facts it gives,—all these are recorded primarily for the purpose of indicating to us the life that God would have us live; of prompting us to choose that life; and of guiding us and encouraging us in our efforts to live that life. The Bible was written that every man and woman may be completely developed in the highest manhood and womanhood and be completely furnished unto all good works. 2 Tim. 3: 16-17.

In other words we may say that it is the one great purpose of the Bible to bring us face to face with God, and thus to arouse moral and religious aspirations and to prompt us to moral and religious efforts. It abounds in biography, history, poetry, parable, and messages of wisdom. But whatever facts, words of wisdom, parables, or other illustrations it contains, were chosen and recorded to create a desire for a better life, and to direct and encourage us in living that better life.

It is this purpose that determines the contents of the Bible,—that determines what was put into it and what was left out of it, and it is this purpose that should guide us in the study, the interpretation, and the teaching of the Bible, and in the applications of its teachings to our own lives and to the lives of others.

We must never forget, then, that the Bible was not written to gratify curiosity, nor to aid man in making a living; nor was it written to convey scientific, philosophical, or his-

torical information and thus aid in developing the intellectual life of men and women; for a supernatural revelation of the industrial arts, and of science, philosophy, and history was not needful. In the fullness of time and *without jeopardizing the moral and spiritual interests of man by the delay*, the unaided power of man would provide for these realms of truth. But the Bible is given to meet the soul's *deepest* longings and most immediate needs,—to reveal some truths at once that might ultimately be discovered and utilized by man, and that could not be delayed without jeopardizing the highest well-being of many; and to reveal some truth that the unaided power of man could never discover and that was nevertheless needful to the highest development of the individual and the race in this world, and to prepare them for the world to come. It is for instruction in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16-17) and not for instruction in science or philosophy, theology or ethics. And the Bible fulfills its great purpose in the highest degree when it reveals Christ; or perhaps we ought to say, when through Christ it reveals God as a loving Father of all who are born into the world. In this great Life is the power of the Bible,—the power of God unto salvation. It is by coming to Christ that we are to have life and to have it more abundantly. He is the great prompting and guiding power that we need, and that all the world needs.

IV. THREE SCRIPTURE PASSAGES THAT INDICATE THE CHARACTER, METHOD, AND PURPOSE OF THE BIBLE.

1. The character, method, and purpose of the whole Bible are clearly indicated by 2 Tim. 3: 16-17.

Every scripture inspired of God is *profitable*:

(1). For doctrine (to indicate what we ought to believe about God, and Christ, and sin, and the way of salvation).

- (2). For reproof.
- (3). For correction.
- (4). For instruction *in righteousness*.

That the man of God may be:

- (1). Perfect (completely matured).
- (2). Thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

This shows us that in its main purpose the Bible has to do with moral and spiritual things and not with science, or philosophy, or the mere facts of biography and history. It gives us the moral and spiritual experience, the moral and spiritual struggles, defeats or victories, of a *few* men and women, so that their experiences may be helpful to *all* men and women. It makes use of history, biography, law, sacred songs, wisdom literature, parable, sermon, and moral precepts, but always for the purpose of arousing moral and religious aspirations and efforts,—always to make us want to live pure and righteous and loving lives and to indicate to us the way whereby we may live such lives.

2. That the revelation contained in the Bible was gradually given, and that it is fragmentary and given in various ways is clearly indicated in Hebrews 1: 1-2.

“God, having of old time, spoken unto the fathers in the prophets *by divers portions* and *in divers manners*”—this describes the giving of the Old Testament. Its books were slowly developed. “Hath in these latter days spoken unto us in His Son,”—this describes the coming of the revelation contained in the New Testament. Its books sprang up suddenly in the second half of the first century A. D., but were written one at a time as the needs of the church made them necessary. Each truth and each book or part of a book of the Bible was given only “in the fulness of the time”—only as it was needed and could be received and appropriated.

3. The character, method, and purpose of the Bible are further suggested by what John (20: 30-31) says concerning the purpose of his Gospel. This thought that John gives as the underlying purpose of his Gospel may be just as truly and just as fittingly applied to the whole Bible; thus we may say of the whole Bible:

And many other things truly did God among the nations of the earth which are not written in these sixty-six books; but these are written that we may believe that God is Creator of all things, and that He is our Father and our Friend; and that believing on Him we may have life abundantly in this world and inherit life everlasting in the world beyond.

WHY SO MANY THINGS ARE OMITTED FROM THE BIBLE

The fact that the Bible is given, not to gratify curiosity, but to prompt and guide and comfort us in living the higher life, will explain why so many things we would like to know are not revealed. Naturally we ask where Cain got his wife, and we wonder why this is not clearly revealed. But if we knew exactly where Cain got his wife there would be nothing in this information that would (1) make us want to live better lives; or (2) tell us how to live better lives; or (3) encourage and comfort us in our efforts to live better lives. We can, therefore, see why this and many other things that we would like to know are not revealed in the Bible. As John says: (John 21:25) if the Bible contained all these things, the world could not contain them. We would stand appalled in the midst of so great a collection of facts and be so confused that we could not select and appropriate the most needful ones. We ought to thank God for what is omitted from the Bible as well as for what it contains.

We ought to recognize that the evidence of the inspiration of the Bible is quite as great when we consider what has been left out of its books as it is when we consider what has been put into them.

V. CHRIST THE GREAT THEME OF THE WHOLE BIBLE

1. Old Testament—Preparation for Christ. Luke 24: 25-26; 45-46; John 5: 39.

The Old Testament serves (1) as a history of God's dealings with the chosen people; (2) as a text-book for the training of the Jews and of many Gentiles in right conceptions of God, holiness, righteousness, and worship; (3) as a source of warning against evil, and as a source of Messianic prophecy.

2. The Four Gospels—Facts about Christ. John 20: 30-31.

3. The Book of Acts—Bringing People into Christ; or the new birth. This book might well be called the Book of Conversions.

4. The twenty-one epistles—Living in Christ.

These epistles were written to Christians to tell them how to live the Christian life.

5. The Book of Revelation—Conquering through Christ.

The Book of Revelation abounds in things that are hard to understand, but it plainly teaches two very encouraging things: (1) that as long as evil exists there will be found men and women who will champion the cause of right and be willing to give their lives for the the cause of Christ; (2) that ultimately right shall triumph over wrong, that the wicked shall be overthrown, and that the saints shall be crowned in the presence of God and dwell with Him forever. It is a book that abounds

in optimism. In some respects it is the most inspiring book in the Bible.*

VI. THE BIBLE AND OTHER SACRED BOOKS.

Both the Greeks and the Romans are practically without sacred books. The great Eastern religions produced many books that are classed as sacred literature. Under the editorship of the late Prof. Max Mueller, of Oxford University, England, a series of these books have been translated and brought together in a collection known as "The Sacred Books of the East." These books contain many noble maxims and moral truths. But between these sacred books of the east and the Bible there is an impassable chasm. Prof. Mueller in his editorial preface to the collection, says:

"I confess it has been for many years a problem to me, aye, and to a great extent is so still, how the Sacred Books of the East should, by the side of so much that is fresh, natural, simple, beautiful, and true, contain so much that is not only unmeaning, artificial, and silly, but even hideous and repellant. . . . These works deserve to be studied as the physician studies the twaddle of idiots and the ravings of madmen. They will disclose to a thoughtful eye the ruins of faded grandeur; the

*The fivefold division of the Bible just given is so simple that it may easily and profitably be taught to the older scholars of the primary class in the Sunday school. But it is so profound in its significance that it may well command the careful consideration of the world's greatest thinkers. It should be kept constantly before each Sunday school class until it is thoroughly committed to memory. It is not to be expected that children will at once understand the meaning of this analysis of the Bible. Its significance will dawn upon them little by little; but it will become clearer, and they will appreciate it more and more, as long as they study the Bible, and they will never be able to exhaust its meaning.

memories of noble aspirations. But let us only try to translate these works into our own language, and we shall feel astonished that human language and human thought should ever have been used for such purposes. If you want to prove the truth, the wisdom, the sober and honest history of the Bible, and the purity of its religion, place it among the Sacred Books of the East. In these books are many grains of gold, but they are hid in mountains of the most extraordinary rubbish; and the extraordinary thing is that it is the rubbish that calls forth the enthusiasm and admiration of the peoples that own them. The sobriety of the Bible, the purity of its spirit, the elevation and devotion of its tone, make it occupy an entirely unique place. Placed among the Sacred Books of the East, the contrast would make its truth only the more stand out.''

QUESTIONS

1. Why should we understand what the Bible is? Give reasons.
2. Give five or more wrong conceptions of the Bible.
3. In what ways, aside from the Bible, does God reveal Himself to men?
4. How does the Bible supplement natural revelation?
5. Why may we conclude that the Bible is God's final *special* revelation?
6. What is the one great purpose of the Bible? Quote three or more passages of Scripture that support your answer.
7. Quote three or more passages showing that the Bible is both divine and human in its origin and contents.
8. Why has the Bible greater worth, given as it is, through men to men, than it would have if given through angels or written in heaven and let down from above?
9. Why are so many things omitted from the Bible?
10. Taking Christ as the Great Theme of the whole Bible, what are its five natural divisions and what is the purpose of each?
11. How did the Old Testament prepare for Christ?
12. Give in your own words what you conceive the Bible to be in its origin, its contents, its purpose, and its method.

SECOND STUDY

BIBLE CHRONOLOGY

Chronology is that science which seeks (1) "to arrange and exhibit the various events which have occurred in the history of the world in the order of their succession," and (2) "to ascertain the intervals of time between them."

I. ABSENCE OF SYSTEMATIC CHRONOLOGY IN EARLY TIMES.

"The true source of chronology is of modern origin; the exact phases belong to the last quarter of the 18th century, and more particularly to the close investigation of the present age."

The nations of antiquity used no system of chronology in either public or private life. They had no era of fixed point of time, chosen because of some great event, which by general consent and custom served as a basis of chronology and from which all important events were dated, as we date from the birth of Christ. Their only method was to date from the beginning of the reign or of the dynasty in which the event occurred. This lack of a fixed era or fixed eras from which events could be dated, makes it impossible for scholarship to agree upon chronology for the nations of antiquity.

In this respect the Jews were in their earliest writings, as the other nations, without any fixed era. In the Old Testament, dates are of frequent occurrence, but usually refer to the age of some patriarch or to the reign of some monarch of their own, or to the reign of some foreign monarch under whose dominion they were forced to live.

II. THE BEGINNING OF A SYSTEMATIC CHRONOLOGY FOR NATIONS.

At the time of Christ some of the Jews were using a world era, dating from creation and constructed from Old Testament chronology. Josephus (b. A. D. 37) uses this era in his work on "Antiquities." The Romans had a fixed chronology beginning with the founding of Rome, B.C. 753. But they continued to date all documents by the year or reign of the ruling consul or monarch. In Spain the era began with B.C. 716. In Greece, the year B. C. 776, and in Babylonia the year B. C. 747 were each made use of as points of departure in dating events. In Syria the Seleucidan era beginning B. C. 312, prevailed and was adopted by the Jews who became Syrian subjects. It is used in the first two books of the Maccabees. But none of these eras received universal recognition even in the nations where they originated.

III. ORIGIN OF THE CHRISTIAN ERA.

After the birth of Christ more than five centuries elapsed before what we call the Christian era was suggested. About A. D. 525, a Roman Abbott, named Dionysius Exiguus, began to count from the birth of Christ in making out his Easter tables. Up to that time and for five centuries afterwards, Christians dated each in the way in which he was accustomed—that is, according to the nation in which he lived. In the tenth century A. D. the Christian era was widely adopted in Europe, though in Spain it did not prevail till the close of the fourteenth century and in Russia till the beginning of the eighteenth century, when it was adopted by Peter the Great. It now prevails throughout Europe, Australia, and America, and is beginning to be recognized in other countries.

The date of the birth of Christ is usually given as 4

B. C. ; by some Bible scholars, as 5 or 6 B. C. It seems very awkward to say that Jesus was born 4 or 5 or 6 B. C. ; but this is made necessary by the fact that the Christian era or habit of dating events from the supposed time of the birth of Christ was at first wrongly fixed. Guided by the best information he had, Dionysius fixed the birth of Christ in the year of Rome 754. For a long time this calculation was thought to be correct, and hence, all Christian nations have adopted it in the reckoning of their time. But scholars now know that Dionysius placed the birth of Christ at least four (some say five or six) years too late. It is not possible, however, to change a system of reckoning that has been so long in use, and we are, therefore, compelled to designate the date of the birth of Christ as 4 or 5 or 6 B. C. This means that we must add at least four years to our date in order to get the exact number of years since the birth of Jesus. Thus, we may say that this is the year 1911 instead of 1907, as we call it.

IV. USHER'S SYSTEM OF BIBLE CHRONOLOGY.

Archbishop Usher (born in Ireland, 1581; died 1656), wrought out a system of chronology that found wide acceptance among Bible scholars. He was an able scholar, and his system of chronology was based on the best information that he could obtain, and was so widely accepted that it came to be used in some editions of King James' Version of the Bible. These are the dates that we may find in the margins of some of our Bibles.

Usher estimated that it was 4004 years from creation to the coming of Christ. But Des Vignoles, in the preface to his *Chronology of Sacred History*, asserts that he collected upwards of two hundred different calculations, the shortest of which reckoned only 4383 years from creation to the coming of Christ, and the longest 6984

years. The difference between the largest and smallest of these numbers is thirty-five centuries. See *Britannica*, art. Chronology. Hales, another great scholar of Ireland, who lived a century later than Usher, calculated that the time between creation and the coming of Christ was 5411 years. This shows that Usher's chronology was not universally accepted. Bible scholars of today recognize that it is imperfect, and modern research is showing that the time from Adam to Christ was probably much more than four thousand years. But there is no other system of Biblical chronology that finds general acceptance; nor is there likely to be any such system in the near future. In the meantime, we may use Usher's chronology as a working hypothesis.

V. DIFFICULTIES IN CALCULATING OLD TESTAMENT CHRONOLOGY.

One of the difficulties in working out a system of Bible chronology is the fact that different versions of the Pentateuch, owing to mistakes in making copies, do not agree in giving the dates of certain great epochs and we cannot be sure, and probably never will be sure, which or whether either of these versions is correct, or which is nearest correct. Thus there are three versions of the Pentateuch—the Hebrew, the Samaritan, and the Septuagint (a Greek translation made about B.C. 250). Their divergence in dates may be seen from the following estimate of time from creation to the flood.

1. According to the Hebrew version, 1656 years.
2. According to the Greek version, 2242 years.
3. According to the Samaritan version, 1307 years.

Usher based his chronology on the Hebrew version, which is probably nearest correct. There are other difficulties that result from uncertainty as to the meaning of certain dates. The greatest uncertainty pertains to the

period before the flood. It may have been much more than 2000 years from Adam to Abraham.

VI. IMPORTANT DATES IN OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY.

There are only a few dates in Old Testament history that need to be remembered by the busy man or woman who desires to have an intelligent notion of what that history is. But these few dates should be thoroughly learned. Perhaps the best way to learn them and to teach them is to diagram them. We may use Usher's chronology, as most of its dates are approximately correct. A very simple diagram and yet a very useful one may be made as follows:

1. Draw a straight line on paper or on a blackboard. At the left hand end mark "creation," or "Adam" and "B. C. 4004." At the right hand end mark "Christ" and "A. D. 1."

2. In the middle of this line make a mark and write "Abraham, B. C. 2000." This is only approximately the date for Abraham.

3. On the left hand half of the line, the pre-Abrahamic side, about four-fifths of the distance from creation to Abraham, make a mark and write "Flood, 1656 years after Creation." To get the date B. C. of the Flood, subtract 1656 from 4004.

4. In the middle of the second half of the line, the part between Abraham and Christ, make a mark and write "David, about 1000 B. C." With this date associate Saul as just before David, and Solomon as just after him, and as the builder of the temple, and you have learned several dates approximately enough for all general purposes. For instance, we may say and teach children that any of the following events took place at about (or a little before or after) B. C. 1000: the events of the united kingdom; the reign of Saul, or David, or Solomon; the building of the temple. With these approximate dates, several other events, as the writing of the Davidic Psalms, and of the Proverbs and other books by Solomon, may be associated.

5. For a few other important dates, put a mark at about one-half of the distance from David toward Christ, and write "Cyrus, B. C. 536"; or, if preferred, write "Dedication of the

second Temple, B. C. 516." Form the habit of thinking of these events as not quite half way from David to Christ.

Elementary diagrams of this kind can easily be made by students, parents, or Sunday school teachers. By using such diagrams, approximate dates of the important events and persons of Bible history can be easily learned and remembered. In the matter of dates, as in everything else, *only a few things* should be learned or taught, but these should be *thoroughly learned, or taught*.

Much attention should be paid to forming *chronological associations*. For instance, with Abraham, we may associate Lot, Melchizedek, Chedorlaomer, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, etc. There is no need of remembering the exact date of any of these events or persons as *separate things*, but any one of them may be said to have happened (or lived) in the time of Abraham, about B. C. 2000. Saul and Samuel may be remembered as early contemporaries of David, and therefore as having lived a little before B. C. 1000. The reign of Solomon, the building of the first Temple, the writing and collecting of most of the Proverbs, the rending of the Kingdom of Israel, and Jereboam and Rehoboam, as first monarch respectively of the northern and the southern kingdoms,—all these may be thought of as being about B. C. 1000, or a little later.

OUTLINE OF OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY

The following outline is based on Usher's chronology and is designed (1) to give a birds-eye view of Old Testament history and (2) to show how the 4004 years, which according to Usher's chronology is the time between creation and the birth of Christ, is obtained.

I. THE WORLD PERIOD.2083 YEARS.

Gen. Chs. I—II,

It should be noticed::

1. That these first eleven chapters of Genesis give *glimpses* of the history of *all the world* from Adam (B. C. 4004) to the second call of Abraham (B. C. 1921). For this reason we call this the *World Period*. It is the only period in which anything like universal or general history is given in the Bible.
2. That only *eleven* chapters are devoted to this period of more than *two thousand* years of universal history, while *thirty-nine* chapters (the rest of Genesis) are devoted to the history of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, a period of only *two hundred and eighty-six* years
3. That the World Period treats mainly not of persons but of *events*, while the rest of the Bible treats of *people* rather than of events.
4. The World Period may be divided into the ante-diluvian and post-diluvian periods.

II. A PERIOD OF PATRIARCHAL HISTORY.215 YEARS.

This period extends from the second call of Abraham (B. C. 1921) to the migration into Egypt. (B. C. 1706.)

III. A PERIOD OF PREPARATION FOR NATIONAL LIFE.

1. The residence and bondage in Egypt, 215 years.
2. The wanderings in the wilderness40"
3. The conquest of Canaan, by Joshua,26"281 years.

IV. A PERIOD OF NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE.

1. The period of the Judges.....330 years,
2. The united kingdom.....120"
3. The divided kingdom.....253"
4. The kingdom of Judah, alone.....136"839 years.

V. THE PERIOD OF EXILE, OR BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY,50 years.

VI. THE POST EXILE PERIOD,136"

Four centuries of prophetic silence

3604	"
400	"
4004	"

The above outline, like many others that may be made, is very helpful in Old Testament study. But for the lessons that these old Testament books are intended to teach, it matters not whether the exact dates can be ascertained or not. We must ever remember that "the value of any book of the Bible is in the moral and spiritual truth it contains;" and that what we are in the habit of calling Bible history is really not history, but selections from history, made for the purpose of teaching religious lessons.

QUESTIONS

1. What is chronology?
2. What can you say of the absence of chronology in the earliest times?
3. How did the Jews fix dates?
4. Speak of the beginnings of systematic chronology and indicate some eras that have been in use.
5. Tell about the origin of the Christian era.
6. Tell about the date of the birth of Christ.
7. Tell about Usher's chronology.
8. What about other calculations of the time between Adam and Christ.
9. What are some of the difficulties in calculating Old Testament chronology?
10. What are some of the most important Old Testament dates, and how may they be remembered?
11. Who are some of the persons that we may think of as contemporaries of Abraham?
12. Why is it not important that we should be able to have accuracy in Bible chronology?

THIRD STUDY

THE BOOK OF GENESIS

Memorize Ex. 19: 6a; Gen. 22: 18; Deut. 6: 4-9.

"There is no book in the world about which more has been written than the Bible, and perhaps there is no portion of the Bible which has given rise to a larger literature than the Book of Genesis. Every word in it has been carefully scrutinized, now by scholars who sought to discover its deepest meaning or to defend it against the attacks of adversaries, now again by hostile critics, anxious to expose every supposed flaw and to convict it of error and inconsistency."—*Professor A. H. Sayce.*

I. SOME FACTS AND INFERENCES ABOUT THE BOOK OF GENESIS.

1. Its authorship and date.

Questions concerning the authorship and date of books of the Bible have long engaged the attention of Bible scholars. Some of these questions have been settled; others may yet be settled; and still others will probably never be settled. Such facts as these are not the most important things. The things of greatest importance about any book of the Bible are its contents and their moral and religious worth. If it had been necessary that we should know the authorship and date of each book, these facts would have been recorded. But in many instances, we are left without any, or with very little exact information. Yet when we know or can infer by whom and when and why a book was written, we are better able to study and interpret that book, and to apply its teachings to our own conduct and to the practical affairs of life in general. This is one of the reasons why there has been such great desire and effort on the

part of Bible scholars to ascertain all that can be known concerning the origin of the books of the Bible.

It was the universal verdict of the Jewish and early Christian tradition that Moses wrote the Pentateuch, or first five books of the Old Testament, except the closing part of the Book of Deuteronomy (ch. 24) where the death and burial of Moses are narrated. This tradition has lately been subjected to a critical examination by European and American scholars, and some have thought that Moses did not write these books in the form that we have them; and some affirm that he wrote but little, if any part of them. Against this latter conclusion, other scholars have strongly protested, and are continuing to protest, with much justice on their side. Geikie says of Genesis:

"Its composition has been assigned by the Jews, from the earliest ages, to Moses, and modern controversy has done nothing to shake this belief, though it has shown that the great lawgiver made use, as might have been expected, of documents ancient even in his day, and it has, perhaps, pointed out, here and there, minute additions of a later hand. But this also, was only what must naturally have happened, for the sacred books would doubtless be annotated and revised as was needed in the course of ages, by some of 'the holy men of old' in the schools of the prophets, 'who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.'"

We believe with Geikie that we may safely hold to the Mosaic authorship of Genesis and other books of the Pentateuch, recognizing that Moses probably made use of older records, and that some changes have been made by later writers and editors of the Pentateuch. It is not impossible, nor at all improbable that Abraham and others before him may have written some of the things that God said, for writing was in use long before Abraham's time; nor is it improbable that

there existed before the time of Moses a sacred literature that has been displaced by the Pentateuch, and that was early lost. The Old Testament writers frequently refer to other books that are now lost. For the names of these books see Num. 21: 14; Josh. 10: 13; 1 Kings 4: 32; 11: 41; 1 Chron, 27: 24; 29: 29; 2 Chron. 9: 29; 12: 15; 25: 26; 33: 18, 19.

Concerning additions that may have been made to Genesis by later editors, it is needful to say that such editorial revision was the custom of early ages; that Jewish and Christian scholars have always recognized that the account of the death of Moses was probably added by a post-Mosaic scribe; and that just as Moses was inspired to write what he did, so other men of God may have been divinely inspired to make changes and additions to what he wrote; while some changes and additions may be the result of mistakes in copying the books or in translating them into other languages.

The exact date of the life of Moses is not certainly known, but we will not be far wrong in saying that he lived about B. C. 1500. The book of Genesis, could not, therefore, have been written earlier than B. C. 1500. This means that for at least the first 2500 years of the history of the world no book of the Bible, as we now have it, existed.

2. The original language of Genesis.

The language in which Genesis was written was the Hebrew. This was not the oldest language in the world. Sayce says that "a study of Hebrew clearly shows that it was not the primitive language as some used to imagine." The book of Genesis (11: 1-9) gives an account of the confusion of tongues. This was after the Flood, and nearly two thousand years after creation, and at least five hundred years before Genesis was

written. What language was spoken before the confusion of tongues we do not know, and probably never will know. When Moses lived, the Israelites were speaking what is now known to us as the Hebrew language. When and where that language originated, and just how it was related to earlier languages and to other languages that were then in use among the nations of the East, we do not certainly know. Moses wrote the Pentateuch for the Israelites or Hebrew people, and, of course, he would write it in their own language. In this language all the Old Testament books were written, except certain parts of the books of Ezra and Daniel, which were written in Aramaic.

3. The ancient versions of Genesis.

The original manuscripts of Genesis, and of all the other Old Testament books, have long been lost. We do not certainly know what became of them. Our Old Testament comes to us through copies that have been made, first from the original manuscripts, and then from other copies. The oldest Hebrew manuscripts that we have were made about A. D. 800. A Greek version or translation of the Old Testament was made for the Grecian Jews in Alexandria, about B. C. 250. The oldest copy we have of this version was made about A. D. 300,—so that we have older copies of the Greek version than of the original Hebrew. There is also a third version of Genesis and the other books of the Pentateuch, called the Samaritan Pentateuch. The Samaritans accepted the Pentateuch as inspired of God, but rejected all other books of the Old Testament. They therefore preserved the Pentateuch, and this Samaritan Pentateuch is still used by the few Samaritans that are now living.

These versions of Genesis, the Hebrew, the Greek, and the Samaritan, are alike in most respects; but in

some things, as on the question of chronology, they differ widely. See page 18. The differences are doubtless due to mistakes made by copyists. But this fact will not detract from the worth of Genesis as a book of religion, which is its essential purpose.

II. THE MEANING AND THE CONTENTS OF GENESIS.

“The name Genesis, or Beginning, is simply the Greek equivalent for the first word in the Hebrew text, which, after having been used from time immemorial by the Jews as a title of the book, was adopted by the translators of the Septuagint or Greek version of the Old Testament, begun in the third century before Christ.”—*Geikie*,

This name is very appropriate because it indicates the character of the contents of the book. If we were regarding the book as mere history without regard to the purpose for which this history is recorded, we might say it treats of “The Beginning of the Hebrew People”; for it is mainly occupied in giving an account of the origin of these people. But our purpose in these studies is not merely to study Old Testament history for the sake of gaining historical information but for the purpose of recognizing the *religious and moral significance* of this history. [We must, therefore, keep in mind that the things in Genesis were recorded and are transmitted to us not for the purpose of conveying historical information, but for the purpose of conveying and generating religious and moral truth and of communicating religious and moral impulse.] Hence, in order to get this religious and moral purpose of the book clearly fixed in our minds, we will consider its contents as setting forth:

1. The beginning of the world, or physical universe. The first words of the book are: [“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”] The purpose of the narrative is not to prove the existence of

God, nor to tell the details of creation, but, assuming the existence of God, it asserts His creation of the world and implies His consequent supremacy in it and over it. Perhaps the antithetic thought in the mind of the writer was the gods of Egypt and of other nations. Hence, his thought may have been: "In the beginning, not the gods, but *God* created the world as we see it. The purpose of the writer evidently was to show that the people for whom he was writing, are responsible not to many gods, but to one God alone and that they should worship Him alone.

In our day, the antithesis would be between God and blind force or law.

2. The beginning of the human race.

The purpose of this narrative is evidently to show the kinship of man to God and thus to restrain him from evil and imbue him with the desire and purpose to realize the high position for which he has been destined. Man is shown to be more than a mere animal—he was created in the image of God. He is therefore called of God to rise above the animal part of his nature. Because of this divine parentage man is to recognize God not only as ruler, but as Father and Friend, with whom fellowship is a privilege.

3. The beginning of sin; or man's disobedience to God. Here man is shown to fail to realize the high position in the universe which his kinship to God made possible.

4. The beginning of provisions for salvation from sin.

God still cares for His children even though they disobey Him. Hence, we have an account of God's instructions and promises to sinful man, and of the choosing and training of the special people who were to

become to Him a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Ex. 19: 6) and through whom He would bless all the nations of the earth. (Gen. 26: 4). Salvation is to come through faith in God's promises and obedience to His commands.

III. PROBABLE OCCASION AND PURPOSE THAT LED TO THE WRITING OF THE BOOK OF GENESIS.

Ex. 19: 6a; Gen. 22: 18; Deut. 4: 14.

The circumstances that called forth any book of the Bible and the purpose that the author intended that book to serve are the two things that determine its contents and that should determine its interpretation. Hence, it is important that we try to understand what were the occasion and the purpose that led to the writing of Genesis. The book, however, has no preface or introduction, and neither the circumstances that caused it to be written nor the purpose that it was intended to serve are anywhere specifically stated. We must therefore try to arrive at this information by studying the contents of the book, and by learning all we can about the life and times of its writer, and the needs of the people with whom he had to deal.

1. Moses and the problem that confronted him.

Looking first at the life and times of Moses, we find that in obedience to a command from God (Ex. 3: 1-10) he was leading the Israelites—probably more than three millions in number,* out of Egypt into Canaan. God's purpose in having Moses deliver these people from Egyptian bondage and settle them in the land of Canaan was that they might be unto Him "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex. 19: 6), so that through them

*Num. 1: 46.—There would probably be at least five times as many people as there were men able to bear arms.

and their descendants all the nations of the earth should be blessed (Gen. 22: 18). We find, however, that these Israelites were far from being holy. At the time when Moses probably wrote the book of Genesis they were in very great danger (1) of lapsing into idolatry; (2) of rebelling against rightful authority; and (3) of sinking into sensualism of the most debasing kind (Lev. 18: 1-30).

We may, therefore, reasonably conclude that it was the mission and purpose of Moses to save these three million Hebrew people from the idolatry, anarchy, and sensualism that threatened them and to make of them the holy nation that God desired them to become, so that through their seed the whole world should be blessed. But a mighty transformation in their lives would have to be wrought before they would be a holy nation, and before God could use them as a means whereby to bless all the nations of the earth. A change in the conceptions, the ideals, the desires, and the habits of the whole people would have to be wrought. Their idolatrous, rebellious, and sensual impulses and practices would have to be brought into subjection to the high ideals of holiness and of doing the will of God. This needed transformation could not be brought about by mere political freedom and change of environment. The new environment, the land of Canaan, would be even more seductive of idolatry and sensualism than Egypt had been. Nor could any code of law, or scheme of legislation, make of these or any other people, a holy nation. How, then, was this transformation to be brought about? This was the problem that confronted Moses,—a problem whose solution would require far more than human wisdom and power. In the light of all that is known of Moses, it is reasonable to conclude

that he took this problem as a burden upon his soul and went with it to God, conscious that in his own wisdom and strength he could not rightly solve it, and that thereby he was led to recognize that he must overcome these materialistic conceptions and consequent sensual tendencies of the people by supplying them with and training them in religious and moral conceptions and ideals. But this could be done by only one process,—the process of *Education*. Freedom from Egyptian bondage, changes in environment, new legislation, new political institutions, and wise leadership,—all these were of worth only as they were educative,—only as they served to supply the people with and to train them in the realization of these religious and moral ideals. We see, therefore, that Moses was far more than a great leader and a wise law-giver. He was pre-eminently a great *Teacher*. See Deut. 4: 14.

2. The contents of the Book of Genesis.

When we come to a study of the contents of the Book of Genesis we shall find that these are well adapted to serve the educational purpose that has just been indicated. It will therefore appear evident, that in writing the Book of Genesis, Moses had in mind to supply the Hebrew people with religious and moral conceptions and ideals, and thus to aid in saving them from the dangers of idolatry, anarchy, and sensualism, that threatened them. The accounts of creation, the fall, the flood, the dispersion, and the experiences of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, *when thoroughly taught to the people*, could not fail to have influence in restraining them from evil and in winning them to the ideal of holiness that was given by God to Moses for them.

We are therefore justified in concluding:

- (1) That Moses was inspired by God to undertake

to make these three million people "a holy nation," and to recognize that the needed transformation in their lives could be wrought only by the slow process of education.

(2) That the contents of Genesis consists of *religious and moral instruction*, that he, through his helpers, was constantly giving these three million people as he was leading them through the wilderness.

(3) That he put this instruction in writing partly for his immediate use in thus training these people, and partly that it might be taught to their children. Deut. 31: 10-13.

The conception of Moses as being pre-eminently a *teacher*, rather than a mere law-giver, is a very important one. The real significance of his life and work cannot otherwise be rightly estimated. His leadership and his legislation are worthy of all the commendation that has ever been bestowed upon them. But he was far more than a general and a law-giver. He did not rely upon mere political deliverance and legislation, but undertook to produce the needed change from sensualism to holiness in the Hebrew people by means of *Education*. His undertaking was wholly an educational one. His legislation has its true significance, not as a code of law, but in the pedagogical influences that attended the adoption of the law. The law was to be a schoolmaster (Gal. 3: 24.) Such an undertaking was an innovation. Never before had the transformation of a whole race of people by means of education been conceived and undertaken.

Moses, then, like Jesus and the prophets, was a great teacher. Genesis, and the rest of the Old Testament, are therefore like the New Testament, a pedagogical literature. Moses' true greatness appears only when we recognize him as a *teacher*. His giving of the law and his leading of the people for forty years are to

be interpreted from the pedagogical view. This conception of Moses as pre-eminently a teacher of the people enables us to recognize the unity of the Bible as pedagogical literature. From the very first, in the Old Testament, as well as the New, *teaching* is the method that God chose as the means whereby he would save the world from sin. It is, therefore, a high calling that God bestowed upon all men and women to become co-workers with Him in making the world what it ought to be, by becoming teachers in the home, in the church, and in the school, and by other educational influences that may be exerted upon the lives of people. Social institutions, legislation, industrial pursuits, amusements and other recreations should be carefully studied from the pedagogical point of view by parents, teachers, statesmen, and all others.

ANALYSIS OF GENESIS

I. THE BEGINNING OF THE HUMAN RACE. Chs. 1-11. 2083 years.

These first eleven chapters give us glimpses of what is sometimes called primeval history, extending from Adam (B. C. 4004) to the second call of Abraham (B. C. 1921).

1. Creation. Chs. 1-2.
2. The Fall. Ch. 3.
3. Cain and Abel; or the first murder.
4. Cain and the Cainites, a godless people. 4: 1-24.
5. The Sethites,—a people who called upon God. 4: 25-26.
6. Genealogy of the Sethites to Noah. Ch. 5.
7. The blending of the Cainites and Sethites, and God's disapproval thereof. 6: 1-12.
8. Noah and the Flood. 6: 9-8: 22.
9. Noah and his descendants after the Flood. Ch. 9.
10. Genealogy—Noah to Abraham. Ch. 10 and 11: 10-26.
11. The dispersion. 11: 1-9.

II. THE BEGINNING OF THE CHOSEN PEOPLE. 11: 27-50: 26, 286 years.

This period extends from the second call of Abraham (B. C. 1921) to the death of Joseph (B. C. 1635). We may say in brief that it is treated in chs. 12-50.

1. The life and times of Abraham. 11:27: 25: 10.
2. The life and times of Isaac. Selections found in 21: 1-35: 29.
3. The life and times of Jacob. Selections found in chs. 25-50.
4. The life and times of Joseph. 30: 23-24; and selections from chs. 37-50.

Many other characters are named in this second section of Genesis, but they are all subordinate characters, and are introduced in the narrative because of their relation to the four whose names are here given.

The following briefer analysis of Genesis may be used in teaching children:

I. FOUR GREAT EVENTS. Chs. 1-11.

1. Creation.
2. The Fall.
3. The Flood.
4. The Dispersion.

II. FOUR GREAT PERSONS. Chs. 12-50.

1. Abraham.
2. Isaac.
3. Jacob.
4. Joseph.

QUESTIONS

1. When and how long ago, and by whom was Genesis written or compiled?
2. In what language was it first written?
3. What are the great ancient versions of Genesis, and what is the approximate date of each?
4. What are the two main divisions of the Book, and what are the distinctive characteristics and the chronology of each part?
5. How did Genesis begin, and how end, and about how many years are included in its narrative?
6. What was the probable occasion that led to the writing or compiling of Genesis?
7. How could these Israelites be transformed into a *holy nation*, (Ex. 19: 6) and become a blessing to all nations of the earth (Gen. 26: 4)?
8. What purpose was the Book of Genesis probably intended to serve in bringing about this transformation?
9. What four great beginnings are indicated in the Book of Genesis?
10. What is the outline of the world period (chs. 1-11)?
11. What four great characters are treated of in the patriarchal period (chs. 12-50)?
12. What brief analysis of Genesis may be used?

FOURTH STUDY

THE FIRST ELEVEN CHAPTERS OF GENESIS

I. SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF THESE CHAPTERS.

1. They deal with *events* rather than with *people*. Certain great events, as Creation, the Fall, the Flood, and the Dispersion, occupy the thoughts of the writer or compiler. He does not seem to care to give an account of people, except as they are related to these events. We have only glimpses of Adam, Eve, Cain, Abel, Enoch, Noah, and others, instead of biographical sketches. In this respect these chapters differ from all the rest of the Bible. Beginning with the twelfth chapter of Genesis and running to the end of the Old Testament, we have accounts mainly of *people* rather than *events*—first of individuals, as Abraham, Isaac, etc., and then of groups of people as tribes and as nations. And again in the New Testament, we have accounts mainly of people—first in the Gospels, as individuals; and then from Acts to the end of Revelation, of people grouped in churches.

These eleven chapters, therefore, stand solitary and majestic as the background of all the rest of the Bible.

2. The chronology of these chapters.

It is very interesting and suggestive to notice (1) that these great events, extending from creation to Abraham, and including, according to Usher's chronology, 2087 years, are treated in only eleven brief chapters, while thirty-nine chapters are included in giving the accounts of only four persons, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, whose history extends through only 286 years.

3. Where did the author get his information, or materials for these chapters?

Different answers have been given to this question. Some of these answers have been:

(1) That God dictated the contents of these chapters to Moses, who wrote word for word as he received the dictation.

(2) That Moses made use of oral tradition that came down to him from the ante-diluvians through Noah and his descendants. This theory may hold that Moses had to be inspired to know what to choose and what to reject from the traditions.

(3) That Moses had a series of visions, and that these chapters are an apocalypse of the past, as the Book of Revelation is an apocalypse of the future.

(4) That Moses made use of written documents, and perhaps of oral tradition along with these; and that he would have to be inspired in order to produce such a production, even with the use of written sources of information. It is known that written documents in great abundance were known and used at the time of Moses.

That Moses should have made use of such documents seems very probable. If he did so, and at times inserted written documents in whole or in part in his productions, then he may be said to be the compiler rather than the writer of Genesis. This would make these chapters a compilation rather than the work of one author. We must remember that it is not necessary that we should spend time in trying to bring others to our way of thinking about these matters. If it had been necessary for us to know with certainty how the author got his materials, this information would have been given so that it would be without reasonable doubt. Since this has not been done, it is wrong (1) for Sun-

day school classes to spend valuable time in arguing about the matter; and (2) for Christian people to dis-fellowship each other because of differences of opinion on this point.

4. The character of the narratives in these chapters.

Are these chapters wholly historical, or partly history and partly poetry, or parable, or allegory, or tradition, with or without historic basis? These and similar questions have received much attention by scholars, and still more attention by those who are not scholars. Even the most devout and learned Christians have differed widely in their answers. Here, again, it is useless for classes in the Sunday school to waste time in argument, and wrong for Christians to try to force their opinions upon others and to refuse Christian fellowship to those who do not agree with them. Neither Jesus nor any of his inspired apostles ever made opinions on such questions a test of Christian fellowship, and we have no right to do so. With Augustine (A. D. 350-430) we may humbly say: "I am not to venture to define a matter of which I must confess myself to be ignorant." All agree that these chapters were not written to teach history, or science, or philosophy, but to convey moral and religious truth and influence. And every devout spiritual scholar recognizes that there is an impassible chasm between this body of literature (Gen. chs. 1-11) and any other literature treating on the same subjects. This impassible chasm is one of the evidences of the inspiration of these chapters.

5. The purpose of these narratives.

Why were these narratives written? What occasion called them forth, and what purpose were they intended to serve? These are questions of vital impor-

tance. The book of Genesis contains no preface, or introduction, and we must therefore infer the purpose that its narratives were intended to serve. All scholars agree that their purpose was to teach moral and religious lessons. We have indicated what seems to be the probable occasion and the immediate purpose of the narratives in the preceding study, Marcus Dods has well said:—

“If any one in search of accurate information regarding the age of this earth, or its relation to the sun, moon, and stars, or regarding the order in which plants and animals have appeared upon it, he is referred to the recent text-books in astronomy, geology, and palæontology. No one for a moment dreams of referring a serious student of these subjects to the Bible as a source of information. It is not the object of the writers of Scripture to impart physical instruction or to enlarge the bounds of scientific knowledge. But if any one wishes to know what connection the world has with God, if he seeks to trace back all that now is to the very fountain-head of life, if he desires to discover some unifying principle, some illuminating purpose in the history of this earth, then we confidently refer him to these and subsequent chapters of the Scripture as his safest, and indeed his only guide to the information he seeks. Every writing must be judged by the object the writer has in view. If the object of the writer of these chapters was to convey physical information, then certainly it is imperfectly fulfilled. But if his object was to give an intelligent account of God’s relation to the world and to man, then it must be owned that he has been successful in the highest degree.”—*The Book of Genesis*.

II. THE CREATION NARRATIVE. Chs. 1-2.

1. The purpose of these two chapters.

It should be kept in mind that this narrative was not intended to teach science. If that had been its purpose, the account would have had to be greatly enlarged; and then it would have had little or no religious value. Nor was it the purpose of this narrative to teach theology. No speculative truth is presented. No attempt is made to prove the existence of God, or to name and classify His attributes. The fact of God is always assumed, and is made use of to teach great and needed religious truths:

(1) That God is the Creator and Ruler of the universe, and that He is in the universe, making all things work together for good to them that recognize and love Him.

(2) That God works according to law. The law of heredity is clearly implied in the frequent statements that everything brought forth according to its kind; and the whole narrative also implies that "whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap." But God is Himself the author of all these laws and is superior to them.

(3) The fact of man's kinship to God, and his consequent heritage of spiritual nature and call to noble achievement is clearly and forcibly taught. Man is the crowning glory of creation. All things were made for him. He is to have *dominion*. He is to multiply and fill the world, and not to let the lower animals have supremacy.

(4) Two divine institutions, marriage and the Sabbath, are given. God Himself performed the first marriage ceremony, and He set the example of Sabbath observance, long before science had shown that it is hygienically necessary that man shall work only six days of the week.

To recognize these and other great truths in these chapters, is far more profitable than to argue concerning

the possibility and method of creation. It is, of course, natural and right that we should speculate concerning the origin of the universe. But we should not waste the time of a Sunday school class in trying to settle such questions, nor refuse to have Christian fellowship with people who do not accept our conclusions about such matters.

2. For the benefit of those who want a brief outline of possible theories concerning the origin of the universe, the following is given:

(1) That the universe, including the human race, is eternal; that it has always been, and always will be, much as it now is.

(2) That it was created by the word and power of God. How this was done we may never know. It is enough for us to accept the fact on faith.

The Bible doctrine of creation is very beautiful and impressive. No other account of the origin of the universe is so wrought through and through with deep religious conviction and lofty religious conception; nor is any other account so powerful in taking hold of the nobler emotions, and in thus giving strength and stability to character. Among Scripture passages that should be studied are the following: Gen. 1: 1-3, 26; Job 38: 4-7; Psalms 33: 6; 90: 2; 104: 24; 136: 5-6; Is. 40: 12-17; John 1: 1-3; Acts 14: 15; 17:24; Heb. 1: 2; 11: 3.

(3) That it is the product of emanation. This is a very old theory. It begins with the conception of God as the all pervading substance of the universe, and conceives of what we call matter as being not real, but only ways whereby God manifests Himself to us. It is the antithesis of materialistic evolution, and is a much more reasonable theory to hold.

(4) The evolution theory.

This theory is not modern. It dates far back of Darwin. There are two schools of evolutionists:

a. Atheistic, or materialistic. No Christian can hold this theory.

b. Theistic, or the theory that God used evolution as His method of creation. Many able and devout Christians hold this doctrine.

When questions concerning the origin of the universe are raised by truth seekers, the safest way is to indicate all the advocated theories, and let each party do his own thinking. Any careful truth seeker will soon discover that none of these theories is without intellectual difficulties, and that there is no needful conflict between profound thought and the faith in God that the Bible seeks to promote.

3. Other accounts of creation.

There are several traditions concerning the origin of the universe and of the human race. Among the most important are the Persian, and the Babylonian. The question naturally arises whether and how these are related to the Genesis narrative. Some have maintained that they are modifications of it; others that they all came from some older tradition; and still others that the Genesis narrative is borrowed from the Babylonian. We need not trouble ourselves with these theories. Competent scholarship may be able to do something toward settling such questions. Whether it does or not, these facts remain:

(1) That the Genesis narrative is the only one that has moral and religious value.

(2) That in this and other respects, it is so superior to other creation narratives that the superiority can be accounted for only by assuming the inspiration of the writer or compiler.

III. THE FALL NARRATIVE. Ch. 3.

1. From the earliest Christian centuries, able Christian scholars have held divergent views concerning the character of this narrative. Some have held that it is literal history; others, that it states a great fact in human history by using poetical language. Still others have maintained that the fall narrative is a parabolic account of the psychological experience of the human race as it became conscious of moral distinctions, and that each individual has a like experience in the course of his or her moral and spiritual development. One writer says: "Every individual, as soon as his moral nature is awakened feels the power and possibility of rising higher through reason and perception. Adam's procedure repeats itself in each individual, who has his paradise, eats of the tree of knowledge, and feels within himself the roots of apostasy from God. Salvation is practicable through the victory of reason over instinct, faith over sense."

2. Whatever may be the character of this narrative, whether history, parable, allegory, or an account of a psychological experience, it is manifest that its purpose is moral and religious. Just as the creation narrative was intended to bring about a recognition of God and conformity to His high purpose, so this narrative of the Fall is remarkable for the vivid and striking portrayal that it gives of the consequences of doubting and disobeying God.

(3) We should remember that it is not the purpose of the Bible to explain the origin of evil and the reason why God permits it to exist, but only to indicate to us the awful consequences of coming under the dominion of evil and how we may be saved from the power of evil and help to save others therefrom. See Rom. 12: 21.

(4) A comparison of the temptation of Eve (Gen. 3: 1-8) with the temptation of Jesus (Mat. 4: 1-11) shows that these temptations have much in common.

IV. CAIN AND THE CAINITES.

1. Cain's crime and its punishment. 4: 1-15.
2. Cain becomes the first atheist. 4: 16.
3. The prosperity and degeneration of the Cainites. 4: 16-24.

4. Seth and the Sethites—a people who called upon God. 4: 25-26, and ch. 5. Notice that Enoch, Noah, Abraham, David, Jesus, and Paul are each given to the world through the Sethites. We have no evidence that any contribution in the way of noble characters ever came to the world from the Cainites.

5. The contamination of the Sethites by the Cainites. 6: 1-8.

Here we begin to see clearly that if evil is sown, evil must be reaped. The first murder is due to sin in the heart of Cain, and is clearly a consequence of the Fall. The prosperity of the Cainites, notwithstanding the fact that they were not recognizing God, is in keeping with the facts of history. Godless people often prosper in worldly things. But the consequences of sin are sure to overtake them sooner or later. Psalm 37. Moreover, sin of any kind is fruitful in various kinds of degrading offspring. The sin in Cain's heart led to murder and this led to atheism. Atheism and its offspring are vividly described in Romans 1: 21-32. Atheism on the part of Cain and his descendants soon resulted in sensualism in the form of polygamy, and a little later in murder. Then the curtain drops and we do not see the Cainites again till they are contaminating the Sethites (6: 1-8). Thus they bring terrible destruction upon themselves and upon others.

V. THE FLOOD NARRATIVE. Chs. 6-8.

1. For other accounts of the Flood, see Bible Dictionary.

2. The cause of the Flood is clearly indicated in 6: 1-7. This may be called God's indictment of the ante diluvians.

3. The Flood should be recognized as the culmination of the consequences of sin. It resulted from persistence in sin, that is, from sin against the Holy Spirit. Excepting Noah and his family, the human race had committed the great unpardonable sin.

4. Moses devotes much space to the Flood—far more than to creation, or to the Fall. He uses this incident with tremendous force in warning the three million Israelites in the wilderness against evil. Such teaching could not fail to be effective as a part of their training in holiness.

VI. NOAH AND HIS DESCENDANTS. Chs. 9-11.

1. God's covenant with them. 9: 1-17.

2. Noah's prophecy concerning his sons. 9: 25-27.

3. The Tower of Babel and the Dispersion. 11:1-9.

The building of this tower was a sin of presumption,—a defiance of God. The people were determined to enjoy the pleasures of sin and escape its consequences. The effort was akin to that of a great corporation that builds a strong tower of wealth, business sagacity, and legal talent and then feels that it can defy the law of the state or nation. These ante diluvians were determined to have a monopoly of the whole earth and use it as they would, and yet be immune from punishment.

4. But evil doers cannot escape the wrath of God, even though they may defy a whole state or a whole nation. God sent confusion upon the people and they were compelled to give up their efforts to build the tower. The

unity of the race was thus broken up as one of the consequences of sin. And the unity of the race, or brotherhood of man, can be restored only as men are saved from sin through Christ.

VII. THE TEACHINGS OF THESE CHAPTERS.

Among the great teachings of these chapters are the following:

1. The supremacy of God.

“In the beginning God.” Here we have the recognition of the great principle of unity that pervades the universe.

2. The prevalence of law.

God is a God of order. We may say God is law, just as we say God is love.

3. Man’s kinship to God.

For man, all other things were created. Man is the crowning glory of the universe. He is to have *dominion*, because he is a child of God.

4. Two great divine institutions—the Sabbath and marriage.

5. Sin and its awful consequences.

6. God’s willingness and efforts to help man get free from sin and its consequences. God is keeping watch above His own. He is patient and forbearing.

- (1) The first prophecy (3: 15b)—a message of optimism.

- (2) A process of rejection and selection; the best and most capable are to be used in saving others.

- (3) God’s use of punishment.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the distinctive character of these chapters and how do they differ from all the rest of the Bible?
2. What events are recorded and how many years are included in them?
3. For what probable purpose were these chapters written?
4. What is the theme of the first two chapters and what *great truths* are taught in them?
5. What passages in the first chapter indicate recognition of *the reign of law* and of *the law of heredity*?
6. What passage in the first chapter is opposed to "race suicide?"
7. What *two great institutions* are indicated in the second chapter?
8. What do you find in common between the temptation of Eve (3; 1-8) and the temptation of Jesus (Mat. 4: 1-11)?
9. Notice in 3: 9-13 the influence of guilt and the tendency to lay the blame on others. Does this describe human nature as it is?
10. What important prophecy do you find in the third chapter?
11. What allusions to toil do you find in the first three chapters of Genesis, and are we to conclude from these that labor was to be regarded as a blessing?
12. What industries are indicated in the fourth chapter?
13. What is meant by going "out from the presence of God?" (4; 16a) In what sense can we say that Cain was the first *atheist*?
14. What are we to learn from the few facts that are recorded in (4: 6-24) about the Cainites?
15. What is the significance of the last sentence in the fourth chapter?
16. What would you say is the chief distinction between the Cainites and the Sethites?
17. What is meant by saying that "Enoch walked with God?" (5: 24)?
18. Can you think of any reason why the age of Methusaleh should be recorded?
19. Notice the blending of the Cainites and Sethites (6: 2),
20. Notice the consequence of this blending as resulting in the disapproval of God (6: 3, 5-6), and in the flood (6: 13-17)
21. Notice how much more space is devoted to the account of the Flood than to the creation or the Fall. Why is this?
22. Why do you suppose so much stress is laid upon *obedience* of Noah (6: 22)?
23. What do you find in the eighth chapter showing that Noah was devoutly religious?
24. Compare 9: 1 with 1: 28.
25. What was God's covenant with Noah?
26. How do you explain 9: 18-26?
27. What is the religious significance of the genealogy that is contained in Genesis?
28. What are the incidents of the Dispersion?
29. What meaning have these eleven chapters for us and for our day?
30. Memorize 1: 1-3-26; 3: 15. and two other passages of your own choosing from these chapters.

FIFTH STUDY

THE PENOLOGY OF THE FIRST ELEVEN CHAPTERS OF GENESIS

I. IS THERE A PENOLOGY IN THESE CHAPTERS.

1. Penology is the science of punishment. There is no science of punishment in these chapters; but there are facts pertaining to punishment that may be examined in the light of the science of penology.

2. Penology implies laws and penalties.

The ideas of law, reward, and penalty are prominent throughout these narratives.

(1) Laws and penalties are of two kinds:

a. There is a natural law—law that inheres in our nature, and which must be accorded with as a condition of our highest happiness and well-being; and there is a corresponding penalty of natural consequences. If we violate hygienic law we must suffer the natural consequences of that violation, unless these consequences can be averted.

b. There is a realm of imposed law—law that is imposed upon us from without by rightful authority, and a corresponding realm of imposed penalties.

c. In these chapters, both kinds of law and penalties are recognized.

II. IMPORTANT PENOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

1. Punishment is often necessary as one of the sanctions of law.

2. The purpose or function of punishment.

(1) To reclaim the wrong doer. This should be the first thought in inflicting punishment of any kind.

(2) To restrain others from wrong-doing.

(3) To protect others in their rights.

3. The motive in punishment.

(1) This should never be personal resentment, or vindictiveness.

(2) The only right motive in inflicting punishment, whether in home, school or state; and whether by parent, teacher, officer of the state, or by God, is love.

We may say that God so loves the world that He punishes evil. He so loved the world that He destroyed the ante-diluvians.

4. The administration of law implies (1) a properly constituted tribunal or court; (2) indictment and process of trial in accordance with law; and (3) the orderly and just infliction of punishment. These chapters do not describe all these, but imply them.

III. FIVE CASES OF CONVICTION AND PUNISHMENT.

1. The punishment of Adam and Eve. Ch. 3.

(1) The imposed laws under which they were placed were as follows:

a. They were to have dominion. 1: 26.

b. They were to be fruitful and multiply. 1: 28.

c. They were to dress and keep the garden. 2:15.

d. They were not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. 2: 17.

(2) No imposed penalty was attached to the first three of these laws; but for violation of the fourth law, the penalty was death.

(3) Three parties are indicted, tried, and convicted.

a. The serpent as guilty of seduction.

b. Eve as an accomplice to Adam.

c. Adam as chief criminal.

(4) Three penalties are inflicted. The death pen-

alty for Adam and Eve evidently was commuted, or the word death was not used in its literal sense.

(5) Adam and Eve each attempt to shift the responsibility for their evil doing.

(6) Adam was not required to incriminate himself, but was given an opportunity to plead guilty or not guilty.

2. The punishment of Cain. 4: 1-24.

(1) There is no designated law against murder. But the worth of human life is clearly implied in 1: 26 and elsewhere.

(2) The indictment (4:10). God holds Cain responsible for his brother. This is a recognition of a great sociological law—"No man liveth to himself and no man dieth to himself."

(3) The sentence. 4: 11-15.

(4) Cain pleads that the penalty is too severe.

(5) He is sullen and defiant and becomes the first atheist.

(6) The Cainites—their prosperity and degeneration. 4: 16-24

(7) Contamination of the Sethites by the Cainites. In this, we see that the mere punishment of a criminal will not stop the spread of evil.

3. The punishment of the ante diluvians.

(1) The indictment. 6: 1-6, 12.

(2) God strove with them. 6: 3. How?

(3) The penalty. 6: 7, 13; 7: 4, 17-24.

(4) The innocent must suffer with the guilty. This can never be avoided.

4. The punishment of Ham.

(1) His sin. 9: 22-24.

(2) The penalty as pronounced by Noah. 9: 25.

5. The punishment of the post diluvians. 11: 1-9.

(1) A sin of presumption—of the nature of treason, It was an attempt to monopolize and abuse the pleasures of life and avoid the penalties thereof. 11: 4.

(3) The penalty—dispersion. 11: 8.

(4) Sin breaks up the unity of the race.

QUESTIONS

1. What is penology?
2. What is meant by the penology of the first eleven chapters of Genesis?
3. What are the two kinds of law and penalty?
4. Why is punishment sometimes necessary?
5. What is the three-fold purpose of punishment?
6. Which of these should always be first considered,
7. What is the only true motive in inflicting punishment?
8. What five cases of conviction and punishment are found in these chapters?
9. Under what four imposed laws were Adam and Eve placed?
10. What three penalties were imposed?
11. What was the indictment against Cain?
12. What was his sentence?
13. If Cain had cried out: "God be merciful to me, a sinner," would God have dealt with him differently?
14. Why was the punishment of the ante diluvians just?
15. What punishment was inflicted upon Ham, and why?
16. What was the cause of the dispersion?
17. How may the unity of the race be restored?

SIXTH STUDY

ABRAHAM: THE GREATEST PURITAN OF ANTIQUITY

He went out, not knowing whither he went. Heb. 11: 8.

I. THE RECORDS OF HIS LIFE AND CHARACTER.

1. The main record. Gen. 11: 27—25: 10.
2. The records of genealogy.
 - (1) Adam to Shem. Gen. 5: 4-32.
 - (2) Shem to Abraham. Gen. 11: 10-27.
3. Some Biblical allusions to Abraham. Neh. 9: 7-8; Acts 7: 2-8; John 8: 31-39; Gal. 3: 6-9 and 15-29; Heb. 11: 8-19.

These records were not intended to serve as a complete biography of Abraham. They are rather a collection of biographical facts, selected for the purpose of teaching moral and religious lessons. Evidently Moses selected and compiled these facts for use in training the three million Israelites holiness as he was leading them through the wilderness. It is from this point of view that we should study and interpret the facts that are recorded about Abraham.

II. THE IMPORTANCE OF THESE FACTS ABOUT ABRAHAM.

1. They are important because of the greatness of Abraham. His was true greatness. If we define great man as one who under trying circumstances contributes largely toward making the world what it ought to be, then Abraham is one of the greatest men that ever lived. He takes rank with Moses, Isaiah, and Paul, as belong-

ing to the greatest of the great men of the world. Probably no other man, aside from Jesus who was more than man, ever influenced the world for good as largely as Abraham has done.

2. Abraham's greatness was not in the realm of military achievements, or literature, or scholarship, or statesmanship, but in the realm of moral and religious life and truth—the realm of character. He is notable for his faith in God and obedience to God. He saved the world from polytheism, and established monotheism as a permanent and vital principle in the life of the world. He promoted moral and spiritual truth, not by what he said or wrote, but by what he did—by the life that he lived and by the influence that he exerted through that life.

3. Abraham was the greatest Puritan of antiquity. In the midst of the most fascinating and insidious and powerful temptations, he stood aloof from evil and influenced others to do so. He was to his age what Luther was to the Protestant Reformation,—what Washington was to American Independence, and *far more*.

4. Notwithstanding his puritanism, he is the most popular man that ever lived. His name is today revered by four hundred million Christians; two hundred million Mohammedans, and twelve million Jews. This means that he is lovingly remembered and revered by nearly one half of all the people that today live in the world.

5. Abraham founded the home as an educational institution. See Gen. 18: 19. This is the greatest contribution ever made to the civilization of the world.

III. THE WORLD AS ABRAHAM KNEW IT.

1. Abraham lived about 400 years after the Flood. He was ninth from Shem.

2. See Old Testament map of Abraham's time in your Bible or elsewhere and notice locations of countries and cities in western Asia and northern Africa.

3. Read about Babylon, Chaldea, Ur of Chaldees, Haran, Canaan, and Egypt, in Bible Dictionary or elsewhere.

4. Notice what is said about material prosperity, military achievements, intellectual culture, and literary productions of these countries.

5. Read the fourteenth chapter of Genesis and get glimpses of political and social life in the time of Abraham.

6. Notice especially that in the midst of great progress in material and intellectual civilization there abounds everywhere an increasing idolatry, sensualism, and absence of moral and spiritual uplift. The world as Abraham knew it was full of darkness and of deeds that abound when men choose darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. Under such conditions of brilliant achievement in material and intellectual phases of civilization, and of hopelessness and gloom in things moral and spiritual, a great call came from God to Abraham.

IV. GOD'S COMMISSION, OR CALL TO ABRAHAM.

1. Records of the commission. 12: 3; 18: 18; 22: 17-18.

For evidence of the call to leave Ur, see Gen. 15:17; Neh. 9: 7-8; Acts 7: 2-4. This was a great call. It was a call to serve as a member of God's cabinet,—a call from idolatry to Monotheism. A call like that that came later to Moses, to give up a life of luxury and endure hardships.

See 26: 4, where this commission is passed on to Isaac.

2. Meaning of "as the stars of heaven," etc. (Gen. 22: 17; 26: 3). See Gal. ch. 3.

3. Analysis of God's call to Abraham.

(1) A command: "Get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will show thee." Gen. 12: 1.

(2) A promise: "And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee and make thy name great." Gen. 12: 2a.

(3) A command to render service: "And be thou a blessing (12: 2b) . . . and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed (12: 3b). This the Great Commission as given in the Old Testament.

4. How could all nations be blessed in Abraham and his seed?

Training in the home is indicated as one of the ways whereby the blessing was to come to the world. See Gen. 18: 19. The home as an educational institution is one of the greatest and best institutions that the Hebrew people have contributed to the civilization of the world. But the blessing was also to come through the Hebrew nation and above all through Jesus who was to be of the seed of Abraham.

5. God was not partial in thus choosing Abraham.

(1) God did not call Abraham to a life of luxury and selfish indulgence, but to a life of service.

(2) God did not love Abraham any more than He loved others, but He chose him because he was the best qualified man of his day to render the needed service, and to become the father of a people who would be most capable of receiving religious truth and most ready to embody that truth in their lives and institutions.

(3) Moreover, God bestows the same kind of a call upon all men; that is, all men are called of God to

be blessed and to render whatever service to the world they are most capable of rendering. Edison and Shakespeare, Gladstone and Luther, no less than Abraham and Moses, were called of God to do the best they could for the good of the world. But the call does not always come in a miraculous way.

The Greeks, with their capacity for art, philosophy and literature; and the Romans, with their aptitude for government, were each a chosen people, quite as much as the Hebrews; but they were chosen for a different purpose. And America is, today, called of God to be a blessing to all nations. So, too, is every citizen of America.

6. What constitutes our call?

(1) Our ability, or aptitude for any kind of service, and absence of a call to still higher service.

(2) Opportunity to fit ourselves for the work and to engage in the work after doing so.

(3) Inward constraint, or prompting toward that field of service—the call of the Holy Spirit. But God cannot speak to us through this inward constraint, unless we, by purity of life, readiness to obey, forgetfulness of self, and earnest prayer, give Him an opportunity to do so.

7. No one calling, or profession, or field of labor, is more sacred than another. The woman who is a faithful and loving mother and keeper of the home; the janitor of a church or other building, who through love to God and to man, seeks to do his work well; the teacher in school, the merchant in his store, the mechanic in his shop, the statesman in his legislative halls, each when he seeks in the spirit of love to do what God would have him to do—any man engaged in any kind of worthy work, and glad to do that work in the spirit of

ove, is filling a position in life that is as sacred as the ministry or as missionary work in the foreign field.

7. LIFE OF ABRAHAM IN OUTLINE.

Two outlines of the life of Abraham are here given. For adult classes the second outline is by far the most important. Each topic in the outlines may be studied as a distinct lesson, or be assigned to a member of the class for study and a special report.

GEOGRAPHICAL

1. His early life in Mesopotamia.
2. His sojourn at Haran.
3. His first sojourn in Canaan.
4. His sojourn in Egypt.
5. His second sojourn in Canaan.

SPIRITUAL

1. His early life. Gen. 11: 27-32.
 - (a). His father was an idolator. Joshua 24: 2, 14, 15.
 - (b). His call to leave Ur. Neh. 9: 7-18; Acts 7: 2.
2. His wanderings. Gen., chs. 12-13.
3. His temporal prosperity. Gen., chs. 13-14.
4. His moral and spiritual struggles, defeats, and triumphs. Gen. chs. 12-25.

71. ELEMENTS OF STRENGTH AND WEAKNESS IN ABRAHAM'S CHARACTER.

1. We must not conclude that the men and women of the Bible were perfect. The Bible knows only one perfect man—the Man of Galilee. Other Bible characters were as human as we are. We must not regard them as saints. They did not claim to be without faults and weaknesses. Nor are they so portrayed in the Bible.

The men who wrote or compiled our books of the Bible were not hero-worshippers. They did not idealize their great characters, but painted them as they were—warts and all.

2. When may we speak of the weaknesses of Bible characters?

(1) Never in mere thoughtlessness.

(2) Never merely to gratify our vanity, or our love of fault-finding, or of derision.

(3) Never merely for the sake of telling the truth. Sometimes truth is better withheld. Love of truth does not permit all things.

We are justified in speaking of the weakness of Bible characters, or of any other historical character, or of a teacher, preacher, neighbor, or friend, only when duty requires it and when love prompts it.

3. First of all we are under obligation to recognize whatever of good and strength there may be in any character. In Abraham, these are so many and so great that they cannot be adequately indicated. We see his faith in God and obedience to God; the purity and grandeur of his life in the midst of mighty and insidious temptations; his magnanimity as shown in all that he did for Lot; his refusals to form entangling political and commercial alliances; his regard for his family; and many other noble traits that reveal to us a character that is grand and strong. All these stand out in bold relief.

4. But we are helped in trying to make our own lives what they ought to be when we recognize that Abraham had his imperfections. Glimpses of these are seen: probably in his going into Egypt; in his falsehood about his wife; in his doubt of God's promise and alliance with Hagar; in a possible over-fondness of wealth; and in his treatment of Hagar and Ishmael.

Concerning Abraham's frailties, G. Campbell Morgan says:

"There are evidences, however, of the frailty of even so great a man as Abraham. Take his deceit about his wife in Egypt. (Gen. 12: 10-20). How disappointing is the record of this man chosen of God for the blessing of all nations of the earth? The faith which triumphed in Haran and Canaan failed in Egyptian atmosphere. In the light of today Abraham's conduct is inexcusable. God saved what Abraham in his fearfulness nearly lost. This was an occasion when for the moment, under circumstances of extreme difficulty, he trusted rather to his diplomacy than to God. Then, again, his fear lest Eliezer of Damascus should be his heir (Gen. 15: 2, 3). It was a right fear in that such an event would have prevented the realization of the national idea. It was a wrong fear in that he did not wholly trust God. Again, the whole story of the birth of Ishmael (Gen. ch. 16) is a revelation of faltering faith.

Against all these let the faithfulness of God be set in contrast. He brought him out of Egypt notwithstanding his folly. And finally, he miraculously provided the seed for the fulfillment of his promise. In the failures of others, faith has demonstrated in its growth through the centuries, that nothing is impossible with God."

VII. CHILDREN OF ABRAHAM.

Matt. 3: 9; John 8: 38-39; Gal. 3: 7, 29.

What is it to be children of Abraham? By Christ and his apostles, men and women of faith are called the children of Abraham. This, to the Jews, was a new interpretation of such passages as Gen. 22: 17; 26: 4. It means that to be a child of Abraham, one need not be his lineal descendant, but must have his spirit and character,—must, like him, be ever ready to go out at the call of God, not knowing where he is to go. Thus, a young man held a position in a grocery. The proprietor added liquors to his stock of trade. The young man refused to stay longer in the employ of such a man. He had no other position. He must make a living for himself and family. But he must first of all

be true to his convictions. Hence, he resigned at once, regardless of consequences. Like Abraham, "he went out, not knowing whither he went." An editor with a salary of \$5000 a year could not conscientiously conduct the paper as the owner wanted it conducted. He made this fact known to the owner, and was told that he could either conduct the paper in accordance with that policy, or resign his position. He had no other position in view, and knew he was not likely to get another with so high a salary. But he promptly resigned. He heard the call of God and heeded it. "He went out, not knowing whither he went." A teacher sought a position as superintendent of schools. The salary was \$2000 a year. He had never received much more than half that amount. But he learned that the superintendency would not come to him unless he bribed a member of the school board by giving him fifty dollars. He had the fifty dollars and more in bank. It would be easy to make out a check for that amount. But he refused to yield to the temptation. He failed to get the position, and went for a year with no position. "He went out, not knowing whither he went."

These men were children of Abraham. They had his spirit of faith and obedience. There are many such men and women in the world,—men and women who seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, knowing that all other needful things will be added. And these men and women are to increase in numbers until they are as the stars of heaven and the sands upon the seashore (Gen. 22: 17; 26: 4). So the Bible promises, and so it will be. The Bible teaches the survival of this kind of the fittest. It is filled with this kind of optimism. Its writers were optimists because they knew God. They recognized that He is in the

world, making all things work together for good to those who love Him. And only those who come to love him will survive.

QUESTIONS

1. In what chapter of Genesis do we find the account of Abraham?
2. What is the purpose of the record?
3. Why is the record so long as compared with the account of creation?
4. Where else in the Bible have we references to Abraham?
5. When did Abraham live, and who were some of his contemporaries?
6. Who was Abraham's father?
7. What does Joshua, 24:2, show concerning the religion of Abraham's father?
8. Read Gen. 11: 27-32; 15: 7; Neh. 9: 7-8; Acts 7: 1-4, and Heb. 11: 8, and draw conclusions concerning the first call of Abraham. What was his probable age when he left Ur? Who accompanied him to Haran?
9. Read Gen. 12:1-5, for an account of God's second call to Abraham.
10. What promises did God make to Abraham?
11. Was God partial in thus choosing Abraham and his seed for special favors?
12. How were all the families of the earth to be blessed in Abraham? See Gen. 18: 19, and Gal. 3: 16.
13. What glimpse of Abraham's inner life have we in Gen. 12: 8b?
14. Do you think Abraham did right in going down into Egypt (Gen. 12: 10-20)? Can we conclude that this was the temptation and fall of Abraham?
15. What conditions of Egyptian civilization are indicated in Gen. 12: 10-13: 2?
16. Give the facts and the teaching of the parting of Abraham and Lot. (Gen. 13).
17. Read Gen. 14, and infer the social, political, and religious ideals and customs of the world, as Abraham knew it.
18. Who was Melchizedek (Gen. 14: 17-20 and Heb. 7: 1-4)?
19. Read Gen., chapters 15 and 16. Can we consider the events of ch. 16 the account of another temptation and fall?
20. See God's rebuke to Abraham and renewal of the covenant in Gen. 17: 1-17.
21. What is the teaching of chapters 18-19 of Genesis?
22. What is the teaching of the offering of Isaac (Gen. 22)?
23. Characterize Sarah by using three adjectives.
24. Why was Abraham so concerned about the marriage of Isaac (Gen. 24)?
25. Give the incidents of the second marriage and of the death of Abraham (Gen. 25: 1-10).
26. By what three peoples is Abraham revered?
27. What elements of strength and weakness are seen in his character?
28. Does God call every person to a life of service?
29. What constitutes our call?
30. What is the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham (Gen. 22: 17-18)? Compare Gal. 3: 7, 29.

SEVENTH STUDY

JACOB: A PRINCE WITH GOD

The elder shall serve the younger.—Gen. 25: 23.

“Some men are evidently born to be the leaders, teachers, masters of mankind. Thus it was with Jeremiah, with Cyrus the conqueror, and John the Baptist,—and these are types of myriads more.

“But to what are these elect? To comfort, ease, success? Nay, for these things fall to the lot of the Esaus rather than to the Jacobs. The elect of God seem to be chosen to stand in the front rank, and bear the brunt of the storms of sorrow, pain and care. . . . They are elect, not for themselves, or for the sake of their own future; but rather for the sake of the work which their position of privilege may enable them to do for mankind.”—*Meyer*.

The Records—Their Message and Purpose.

1. Selections from chapters 25-50.
2. In these records, we have an interesting psychological study. Glimpses of the inner life of a great soul are given. We see “a curious mixture of attractive and repulsive traits of character,”—a vivid picture of man’s double nature. We are to see this soul as it is controlled by ambition and greed; as it is moved by cunning and heartless disregard of paternal love and authority. Plainly we are to see the possibilities for good and plainly we are to see the tremendous tendencies toward evil. The noble impulses are in constant conflict with the baser passions and tendencies. There are tremendous moral and spiritual struggles, and the nobler impulse at times submits to overwhelming defeat; but at times it gains a few victories, and then comes

Peniel. The victory is on the side of right. Jacob is no longer a supplanter, but a Prince with God.

3. These experiences of Jacob were recorded by Moses that they might serve as a part of the training in holiness that he was seeking to give the three million Israelites when he was leading them from Egypt to Canaan. The influence of such lessons on the character of these untrained Israelites would be strong for good.

Jacob's Life in Outline.

I. THE BIRTH AND EARLY LIFE OF JACOB AND ESAU.

1. The prophecy (25: 23) concerning the boys.

2. Think of their heredity.

(1) Through Abraham and Isaac.

(2) Through Sarai and Rebecca.

3. Think of their environment and probable home training.

4. What glimpses of their dispositions do we get in 25: 26-34?

At first sight, does Esau or Jacob impress you the more favorably?

5. See Dod's Genesis for an interesting and helpful contrast of the characters of these boys.

II. TWO GREAT MISTAKES THAT JACOB MADE

1. The purchased birthright. 25: 27-34.

(1) What the birthright included.

a. Special honor and respect from other members of the family, and from other families and tribes.

b. Double portion of the paternal goods. Deut. 21: 15-17.

c. Headship of the family in case of death of the father; and of the tribe, or nation, if the father ruled over either. Numbers 7: 2; 21: 18; 25: 14; 2 Chron. 21: 3.

(2) Did not Jacob have a right to purchase this birthright if Esau was willing to sell it? Esau did not value it, and would have bartered it away, anyhow. If Jacob did not cheat him somebody else would. Have we the right to take the money of a drunken man or a foolish fellow, simply because somebody else will do it, if we do not?

2. The stolen blessing.

Jacob did not have to get the birthright, or to receive the blessing that he stole, any more than Abraham needed to take Hagar to be his wife. God had in each instance promised what He would do, and He would fulfill this promise in his own good time. Both Abraham and Jacob brought unnecessary sorrow and heartache upon themselves by failing to believe God; and what they did was a hindrance, rather than a help, toward realizing the blessings that God had promised.

The sin of Rebecca and Jacob was at root a sin of unbelief, just like the sin of Adam and Eve in partaking of the forbidden fruit; just like the sin of Abraham and Sarai in having Hagar become Abraham's wife. It is the same sin that the business man commits when he is dishonest in his transactions; that the young man commits when he thinks he must sow his wild oats in order to get the most out of life; that men and women commit when they sacrifice convictions or live beyond their means in order to mingle with what is known as the highest society; that the writer of Hebrews (3: 12) was warning the Hebrew Christians against. The mistakes that Jacob made in purchasing the birthright and in stealing the blessing, is one that we are all in danger of making each day of our lives.

III. JACOB'S FLIGHT.

1. Isaac and Esau discover the deception. 27: 31-40.

2. Esau's hatred of Jacob. 27: 41-42.
3. Rebecca's contrivance to save Jacob.
 - (1) With Jacob. 27: 42-45.
 - (2) With Isaac. 27: 46.
4. Isaac sends Jacob away. 28: 1-5.
5. Esau's spite marriage. 28: 6-9.
6. For his previous polygamy, see 26: 34-35.

IV. BETHEL.

1. Locate Beer-sheba, Bethel, Haran.
2. Jacob's dream. 28: 10-16.
3. Jacob's conditional promise to God. 28: 16-22.

V. JACOB'S TWENTY YEARS RESIDENCE IN HARAN.

Here we have a vivid portrayal of Eastern life and customs.

1. His arrival at Haran. 29: 1-14.
2. Jacob's double marriage and domestic life.
29: 15; 30: 24.
3. Jacob's desire to return to Canaan. 30: 25-26.
4. Laban's sons are jealous of Jacob. 30: 27; 31: 2.
5. Length of the stay in Haran. 41: 38 and 41.

VI. JACOB RETURNS TO CANAAN.

1. God commands Jacob to return. 31: 3.
 2. The return journey is begun. 31: 4-21.
 3. Laban follows Jacob. 31: 22-35.
 4. Covenant between Jacob and Laban. 31: 36-55.
- Mizpah, 31: 49.

5. Jacob continues his journey toward Canaan.
32: 1.

VII. PENIEL.

1. Jacob fears Esau and tries to appease him.
32: 3-21.
2. Jacob spends a night in prevailing prayer.
32: 22-32.

3. Jacob and Esau meet. 32: 1-17.
4. Jacob arrives in Canaan and builds an altar. 32: 18-20.

VIII. JACOB'S DOMESTIC SORROWS AND TROUBLES.

1. Dinah's misfortune. 34: 1-7.
2. Dinah's brothers revenge their sister's wrong. 34: 5-31.

3. Jacob's family puts away strange Gods. 35: 1-15.

4. The death of Rachel. 35: 16-21.
5. Reuben's deed of shame. 35: 32.
6. The death of Isaac. 35: 28.
7. Joseph and his brethren, chapters 37-49.

IX. JACOB'S SOJOURN IN EGYPT.

1. The occasion that brought him to Egypt. Chs. 42-45.

2. God's renewal of the covenant. 46: 1-4.
3. The journey and the arrival at Goshen. 46: 5-28.
4. The meeting of Jacob and Joseph. 46: 29-30.
5. A rehearsal, preparatory to meeting Pharaoh.

The Pharaoh on the throne was not a true Egyptian, but belonged to a line of kings from Asia that had usurped the throne. These kings were known as the Hyksos, or shepherd kings, and were, of course, hated by the Egyptians (45: 34b). This explains why Pharaoh was so willing to receive the Hebrew shepherds from Asia. They might become very useful to him.

6. Jacob is presented to Pharaoh. 47: 1-12.
7. Israel dwelt in Goshen. 47: 27-31.
8. Jacob's last days. Chs. 48-49.
9. Jacob's burial. 50: 1-14.

SUGGESTIVE THOUGHTS

1. When we see Jacob's inner life, and its need of cleansing, we see ourselves. In his experiences are

revealed in a striking way, tendencies, dangers, and possibilities that are universal. Jacob's outward life was no doubt highly respectable, but he was guilty in the sight of God. "If God could make a Prince out of such a nature as Jacob's, what may he not make out of us, if we will permit Him to come into our lives."

2. The foolish Rebecca nearly ruined her son. Had she been a true wife and a wise and good mother, she might have saved Jacob and herself and others of many troubles and heart-aches, and Jacob's life might have been a much richer blessing to the world than it finally became. There are thousands of boys and girls that might become a blessing to the world, rather than a menace, if it were not for the worldly ambitions of their mothers and fathers. Such parents, like Rebecca, are preparing for their own bitter regrets and heart-aches, and are leading their children and other people into misery.

3. Jacob at Bethel.

This may have been Jacob's first night from home. For him, with his consciousness of guilt and fear, solitude had no charms. His brother might pursue him. The country was full of robbers and wild beasts. The Canaanites were unfriendly, and he dared not ask them for shelter. His guilty conscience troubled him. But at last, in that lonely place, and with a stone for a pillow, he fell into troubled sleep.

"As he slept, he dreamed; and in his dream his mind wove together many of his waking thoughts in fantastic medley. The striking appearance of these huge boulders; the memory that Abraham had built one of his earliest altars there, remnants of which may have been still standing; his last look upwards at the wondrous heaven, studded with the brilliant constellations of an Eastern night—all these wove themselves into his dreams. It seemed as if the huge slabs of limestone came near together, and

built themselves up into a gigantic staircase, reaching from the spot where he lay to the starry depths above him; and on that staircase angels came and went, peopling by their multitudes that most desolate region, and evidently deeply concerned with the sleeper that lay beneath. Nor was this all; for, from the summit, the voice of God fell like music."—*Meyer*.

He now realizes that this is not an empty universe—that it is full of God; and that there is, after all, a connection between heaven and earth. He also realizes in a vague way that God has a work for him to do—that this is not a world of chance, or of fate, or of mere individual whim, but a world filled with divine purposes.

This was to Jacob the beginning of conversion, or the new birth. His whole after-career is the history of the "education of a human spirit." Yet Jacob understood not. He would bribe God. In his vow (28: 20-22), he tells God what he will do for Him, if God will make him rich and great, and always give him his own way. Poor, foolish Jacob. He meant far better than he said, just as many a trembling soul does. God takes us at our deepest meanings, and not at our stumbling utterances.

4. Jacob's religious experience after Bethel.

Conversion, or the new birth, does not free one from the consequences of his sins. It only makes possible the overcoming of sin and its consequences. Jacob had still to suffer for the sins he had committed. In Haran, he must suffer the same kind of treachery at the hands of Laban that he had practiced on Esau and Isaac. And even after Peniel, and the fuller conversion to God that he there experienced, he must still reap the penalty of his early sowing. He had been an ungrateful and reckless son to his father, and now his children are to cause him heart-ache and sorrow. In the thirty-fourth chapter of Genesis, we read that Dinah, his daughter, "went out

to see the daughters of the land." Actuated no doubt by a perverseness that she had inherited from her father, she is determined to go into society, even though warned that this society is not safe. Although she went ostensibly to see the daughters of the land, we soon find her in a flirtation with one of the young men. Then follows a love affair, ending in seduction. From this, other serious troubles result. Then comes Reuben's deed of shame, and later the shameful treatment of Joseph by his brothers. The father's heart is sorely tried. He is experiencing anguish of soul that is akin to that which he had caused his blind old father to feel. But Jacob bore all these sorrows himself, and did not blame God for them. He is truly a Prince.

5. Peniel 32: 24-32.

"Around this verse (24) and the account which follows learned men have written much to explain what the story means. Some think Jacob fell asleep and dreamed that he wrestled with a man. Others think that his fear of Esau caused him to imagine that one of Esau's men stole upon him in the night and attacked him; hence the story. Still others, while accepting the spiritual teaching of the narrative, deny that Jacob actually wrestled with a real being. Others again stick to the literal statements and believe that in some way, not explained, Jacob actually had a struggle that night with a real person and that this person was the Divine Being, called in our text "a man," in verses 28 and 30 "God," and in Hosea 12, 3rd, "the angel." My own opinion is as follows:

First of all we must remember this was a great crisis in the life of Jacob. It makes little difference that he had been a bad man in some ways, at present he was in sore distress and fear and he had repented him of the evil done his brother and asked the Divine Being for help.

"In the second place we must remember it was the age of the childhood of the race, when God was still teaching men certain great truths through outward, physical object lessons.

In the third place we need to remember that the divine power may adapt itself to any form of expression in order to make an

impression on the heart and mind of a man, and that because it is unusual it is no evidence that it could not occur.

In the fourth place we must remember the end which God had in view in subjecting Jacob to this test. The means employed are not the subject of discussion so much as the end attained. As long as we are finite we shall always wonder at God's use of means. The end in view in this case, it seems to me, is so plain, so necessary, so far reaching that the mind which stops to criticise the means loses the very kernel of the entire truth, misses the whole teaching of this remarkable story of the wrestling Jacob.

So, then, it is my opinion, that on that night by the ford Jabbok back in the early annals of human history, the man Jacob really did wrestle with a real being, who was in a real sense the divine Person, known in Old Testament language as "a man," or "the angel of the Lord," and even as "God" himself. It was, I believe, the Divine Being, who afterwards was manifested to the world as Jesus Christ, the incarnate God, who wrestled with the man Jacob that night. And the whole object of that struggle which went on until day began to break over the hills of Moab, was to teach, not only Jacob but the entire race for all time, that divine blessing sometimes comes out of persistent long continued, faithful, courageous struggle with the divine power. And Jacob said, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me."—*Charles M. Sheldon*, Author of "In His Steps."

"This wondrous scene does not, in my opinion, correspond to that change which we call conversion. That was determined, surely, by the angel vision at Bethel. But it may rather be compared with that further blessing, which sometimes comes to a Christian after some years of religious experience and profession. There is no reason, in the nature of things, why it should be so. There is no reason, at the moment of conversion, we should not at once step into the realization and enjoyment of all the possibilities of Christian living. But still, as a matter of fact, it very often happens that some years of wilderness wanderings do intervene between the deliverance of the Passover and the passage across the Jordan into the land of promise, and rest, and victory. Many a child of God who has no doubt of acceptance and forgiveness, is conscious of a broken and fitful experience: often foiled and overthrown; wishing to do good, but unable to do it; full of self-reproach and bitterness of soul. Then

there comes a time when he is almost forced into a new experience. He passes into a climate that brings into glorious fruitage the seed-germs which were lying in his nature undeveloped. He receives an abounding freshet of grace, that lifts him sheer above all the former levels of his existence, and launches him on the flood-tide of blessedness. If you have never known this in happy experience, you can hardly understand what an extraordinary change comes over all things; or how great a contrast severs the new from the old. Such an experience fell to Jacob's lot after that memorable night."—*Meyer*.

6. Jacob is called of God to move to Bethel. 35:1-7.

It seems that Jacob's family were sinking to the low level of the people about them. They could not resist the insidious evil that environed them. God therefore calls upon them to move to Bethel, and to start the religious life anew.

"God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there." No human ear now catches the tones of that majestic voice. Yet, God often speaks to us also—through our own consciousness, and within our own souls. Yes, and he speaks oftener than most of us are aware. We do not always distinguish the voice within us to be the voice of God. We act on an impulse, we know not why. But as we review our path from the sweet summit of religious revival to which we have been led, we recognize, with thankful awe, that the voice to which we listened was none other than that voice which Jacob first heard speaking to him in his angel-haunted sleep. Has it not been so with you? You have followed an inward impulse, not knowing whence it came, or whither it led; you have wandered blindly on, reaching positions of which you never dreamed, but which are evidently your special sphere: and it is only on looking backwards that you realize how every step of your way has been ordered by a wisdom not your own; how the impulse originated in Him who prompts the swallows to follow the sun to warmer climes; and how the voice called you was the voice of God.—*Meyer*.

Jacob's Character

"In Jacob we can see all the best and all the worst qualities of his race."—*Geikie*.

1. His early manifestations of individuality.
25: 27-34.

This reference to Jacob's early life, suggests that he had been a home boy, and that when he came to manhood, he still preferred the quiet home life. He was probably undemonstrative and his temperament may have bordered on the morose. It is probable that he had early manifested a jealous, wilful, and grasping disposition, and that his mother had encouraged him in this.

2. Prominent among his traits of character, are the following:

(1) A strong personality, with good and evil each striving for the mastery. Outwardly, his demeanor was quiet and reserved. But inwardly he was aglow with ambition and enterprise. He was by nature, hungry for achievement and possession. This at times resulted in covetousness and in the practice of cunning and trickery.

(2) A man of shrewd business sagacity, possessed of foresight and controlled by a calculating and bargaining spirit; possessed also of that self-restraint that enabled him to deny himself for the sake of what he conceived to be a future good, and of a willingness to work and of wonderful perseverance, as shown in his willingness to serve Laban seven more long years for the sake of Rachel.

(3) Side by side with his capacity for bargaining and for achievement, for covetousness and for cunning, was his capacity for religious faith and fervor; and for sorrow for sin and for genuine humility (32:10).

(4) Then he was a man of strong affection, but his affections were confined to the select few,—for his mother, then for Rachel, then for Joseph.

3. These elements of his nature that might have been so controlled that they would always give

strength to his character, were often in danger of leading to his downfall. With the connivance of his mother, he allowed his keen business sagacity to degenerate into trickery. Any good thing may thus, through wrong use, become a source of evil. Jacob must, by nature, be either a very good man, or a very bad one.

4. But in his hard experiences, he turned to God in real repentance, and God came into his life and gave him victory over his weaknesses. When he found himself in trouble he did not blame God or other people, or become morose and bitter, but humbled himself and said: "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which thou hast shown unto thy servant" (32:10). He was poor in spirit. His spirit was that of the publican, who said: "God be merciful to me, a sinner." It was this emptying his life of himself that made it possible for God to come into his life and enrich it, and make him a Prince with God. It is thus that,

"Men may rise on stepping stones
Of their dead selves to better things."

5. Jacob's capacity for faith and for submission to God are the crowning traits of his character. It is here that he approaches Abraham. Apparently he has much more to overcome than Abraham, but when he does overcome, he is a true child of Abraham, and worthy to be the father of Joseph.

QUESTIONS

1. Why is so much space devoted to Jacob, in the Book of Genesis?
2. What can you say of Jacob's heredity?
3. From what you know of Isaac and Rebecca, what can you say of the probable home training of Jacob and Esau?
4. Compare the characters of the two boys,
5. What two great mistakes did Jacob make just before leaving Canaan?
6. Did Jacob need the birthright and the paternal blessing in order to take the high rank that God had promised his mother he should take?
7. What was the essential nature of the sin committed by Rebecca and Jacob, in connection with the birthright and the blessing?
8. What was Rebecca's double contrivance to save Jacob from Esau?
9. Characterize Esau.
10. What was Jacob's experience at Bethel?
11. Would you say that this experience of Jacob at Bethel can be called conversion?
12. What was Jacob's conditional promise to God? Can we call this an attempt at bribery?
13. How did Laban receive Jacob?
14. Characterize Laban and indicate his admirable qualities as well as his ugly ones.
15. Does your sympathy go out most toward Rachel or Leah? Why?
16. What evidence have we that Jacob, while in Haran, still retains his spirit of cunning?
17. What was the covenant between Jacob and Laban as Jacob returned to Canaan?
18. What do you call the experience of Jacob at Peniel?
19. What evidence have we that Jacob was sincerely and earnestly religious after returning to Canaan?
20. What are some of the troubles that came to him there?
21. Why was Pharaoh so ready to favor Joseph and to receive Jacob and his people and place them in Goshen, the richest part of Egypt?
22. Tell about Jacob's last days, death and burial.
23. What elements of strength and weakness do you find in Jacob's character?
24. When you see Jacob's inner life you see yourself. Explain this.

EIGHTH STUDY

JOSEPH: THE RISE OF A YOUNG MAN TO POSITION AND INFLUENCE

The story of Joseph is one of the most elaborate and artistically beautiful stories in all literature.

—*Prof. Moulton.*

The profoundest element in the character of Joseph was his sense of the presence of God in his life.

—*Prof. Rauschenbusch.*

The Records

1. His birth. 30: 22-24.
2. Glimpses of his life—selections from chs. 37-50.
3. The purpose of this record is to teach moral and religious lessons. When considered as having been used by Moses in training the three million Israelites in holiness, we see a new meaning in this story of Joseph; for these Israelites needed the inspiration of such a hero as Joseph, and much more, to save them from sinking to the low level of the Canaanites (Leviticus, ch. 18), with whom they were soon to come in touch.

I. PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS.

1. Joseph's heredity.

- (1) Through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
- (2) Through Sarai, Rebecca, and Rachel.

Consider the elements and weakness in each of these six ancestors.

"Like Abraham, he was strong, decided, and prudent; like Isaac, patient and gentle; like Jacob, warm hearted and affectionate."—*Edersheim.*

2. Joseph's home training.

In his early life Jacob evidently had no time to devote to the training of his children, though Abraham had been called of God (18: 19) to make the home an educational institution. Rachel seems to have been without those qualities that make a great mother. She was weak, and probably cared more for dress and society than for caring for her children. Leah was, perhaps, a better mother than Rachel, but she would not have the care of Joseph. Not until his experience at Peniel, does Jacob seem to have much interest in the home influence upon his family. After that he doubtless gave some attention to the training of his children. And it is probable that Joseph would receive special attention from him.

3. Joseph's early environment.

Jacob and his sons were shepherds, and were in the midst of a heathen civilization that was so honeycombed with wickedness that God later commanded that the Israelites should not mingle with the people (Joshua 23:6-13). Evidently Jacob and his family lived on friendly terms with some of these inhabitants of the country, and were to some extent corrupted by contact with them. Certainly there would not be much moral and spiritual uplift in Joseph's environment. Most of the downward influences of our own civilization, and much more that is degrading, would be there, without our Christian homes, churches, schools, and libraries, and our numerous men and women whose lives have great character-forming value.

II. A SUGGESTIVE OUTLINE.

1. Joseph's life in Canaan.

(1) His birth. 30: 22-24.

(2) Trouble with his brothers and reasons therefor. Gen. ch. 37.

- a. Polygamy and its consequences.
- b. Probably a lack of home training and of consistency in parental life.
- c. Tale-bearing.
- d. Parental partiality.
- e. The two dreams.
- f. Differences in temperament.

(3) Joseph is sold as a slave to the Ishmaelites.

2. Joseph's life in Egypt. chs. 39-50.

(1) His life as a slave. 39: 1-12.

- a. Glimpses of Egyptian social life.
- b. Joseph secures the favor of Potiphar.
- c. A great temptation resisted.
- d. The adverse reward of virtue.

(2) Joseph a prisoner in Egypt. 39: 13-41: 36.

- a. The unjust imprisonment without trial.
- b. Joseph secures the favor of prison-keeper.
- c. Joseph interprets dreams.

(3) Joseph as Prime Minister of Egypt. Ch. 41: 37; ch. 50.

- a. His age. 41: 46.
- b. His marriage. 41: 45.
- c. His wise provision for the famine.
- d. Birth of his two sons.
- e. Joseph and his brothers are brought together.
- f. Jacob goes down into Egypt.
- g. Closing events of Joseph's life.

III. JOSEPH'S CHARACTERISTICS AND CHARACTER.

We get our first glimpses of Joseph's characteristics and character in the thirty-seventh chapter of Genesis, when we see him as a shepherd boy at the age of seventeen. He brought evil report of his brothers to his

father. This may have been a necessity. But we see that he is the favorite son of his father, and the manifestation of parental partiality (verse 3) must result in evil. The boy Joseph could hardly escape faults that would be peculiar to such home influence. We may conceive of him as being somewhat vain and rather dainty in his bearing. But his chief characteristic was his habit of dreaming. Perhaps he ought not to have told these dreams to his brothers; yet he was only a boy, and probably the parental counsel was not always wise. But the dream habit in itself, is not a bad thing. It may result in heavenly visions—it may result in noble achievement. The trouble with Joseph's brothers was that they did not dream. They probably worked hard and looked upon Joseph as a mere idler. And if Joseph had been a dreamer and nothing more, their contempt for him would have been justifiable. Neither dreaming or work should go alone; they belong together.

“Dreams grow holy put in action,
Work grows fair through starry dreaming;
But where each flows on, unmingling,
Both are fruitless and in vain.”

Joseph was a thoughtful boy. If he had lived today, he would have wanted to go to college. As it was, he made good use of his opportunities, for we find him well equipped for life. He is ready for every emergency. His thoughtfulness and his willingness to work made him a well-equipped and resourceful young man,—ready to meet the hardships of life and overcome them. His moral nature is especially strong, and his promptness and strength in resisting temptation commands respect and admiration. Apparently, he did not have great soul struggles, like those that his father had experienced. It is probable that he had received far more and far better

parental training than Jacob had received. And it may have been easier for Joseph than it had been for his father to gain moral victories. But we must not conclude that he had no moral battles to fight. Such a manhood as his must have been the result of early self-mastery, and of victories over evil that cost a struggle.

Like his father, Joseph had a genius for practical affairs. He was a man of action as well as a man of thought. It was easy for him "to get on in life." One of his most notable characteristics was his habit of making friends. Another was his readiness to meet emergencies. Under the most adverse circumstances, we find him coming to the front, and assuming positions of trust and responsibility. Why was this? Not because he was born lucky, nor because God favored him, regardless of merit. God was indeed with him, but it was because he himself made it possible for God to enter into his life and use him. Most men in prison would give up study. But Joseph made his prison life a continuation of his school life. He still dreamed dreams, but he did far more. He became acquainted with the chief butler and the chief baker, and probably with other public men who had been cast into prison. "That prison was the best school in Egypt for learning such things as an Egyptian public man would need to know. A prison is a dull place. In the enforced leisure of prison life Joseph came into confidential contact with many a man whose conversation was worth listening to. This might have been of no use to him had it not been for his splendid habit of doing his best, no matter how adverse the circumstances. Through that habit his imprisonment was transformed into a course of education that fitted him, later, for the public duties that were thrust upon him."

In this connection, we may take time to recall the

names of others of the world's notable prisoners—men who rose above adversity and so used their prison life that it became a blessing to them and to the world. Among these are Paul, John on Patmos, Peter, Daniel, Bunyan, George Fox, and Sir Walter Raleigh.

But the most remarkable thing about Joseph is his robust moral and religious character. And first of all he was pure in heart and was thus able to see God. We find him always ready to acknowledge God as the source of his wisdom and strength. It was this that enabled him, when a great and insisting temptation came to him, to turn from it with prompt and final decision. Environed as he was, nothing less than a pure heart and a consciousness of the presence of God, could have withstood such a solicitation to sin. Such a man, combining thoughtfulness, resourcefulness, and willingness to work his way up, with integrity of character and high moral purpose, must succeed in life. The world is looking for such men today. And they are by no means plentiful,—especially men of pure hearts and unswerving moral purpose. John Wannamaker is reported to have said: "It is the hardest thing in the world to find clean, strong, healthy, upright young men." He like other leaders in great enterprises, is constantly in need of such men. A New York merchant of large success and long experience, said recently that far more men fail in business from lack of character than from lack of business ability and opportunity. If Joseph could begin as a poor boy in America today, he would soon secure promotion after promotion till he would be in a position of great responsibility and influence. But Joseph's moral strength is seen not alone in the purity of his character, but also his gentleness and sweetness of disposition. In the midst of terrible adversity, and suffering one wrong after another, he did not

become vindictive, or morose, or pessimistic. He kept sweet. He worked for the good of the nation in which he was unjustly enslaved and imprisoned, and he gladly and fully forgave his brothers for the great wrong they had done him. Elevated to the throne, he did not become proud and haughty and cruel.

But we must not conclude that Joseph was perfect. He was only human. He was probably vain and inconsiderate as a boy in relation to his brothers. We cannot help thinking that he did wrong in not sending messages to his old father,—especially after he came to high position and influence in Egypt. It seems probable that he was severe in taking all the money and land from the Egyptians in exchange for corn that they must have in order to save themselves and their children from starvation. These are indications of flaws in the character of Joseph. But we must not expect to find him a perfect man. When we compare his weaknesses with his many and great virtues, his character still stands forth as worthy of the highest admiration. And the underlying secret of that character should be recognized by all parents and teachers and by all young people. It is this: *He had a sense of the presence of God in his life,—a sense of divine mission.* “The presence of God in a life gives it purpose.” Joseph believed himself called of God. See 45: 5-8. And he attributed his wisdom and power to God. See 41: 15-16.

IV. JOSEPH'S CAREER MARKS AN EPOCH IN HEBREW HISTORY.

1. It led to a transplanting of Israel in Egypt.
2. This is the first contact of Hebrew history with the history of a great nation.
3. In a strange land, the fidelity of the people to their religious faith and ideals was to be tested.

4. The advantages of the sojourn in Egypt were many and great.

QUESTIONS

1. Where do we find the story of Joseph?
2. What was the probable occasion and purpose that led Moses to record these facts about Joseph?
3. What can you say of Joseph's hereditary traits? Of his probable home training? Of his early environment?
4. What are the two main divisions in his life?
5. What six things probably led to the trouble that he had with his brothers?
6. What glimpses of social and political customs in Egypt may we glean from Genesis as we study the story of Joseph?
7. How do you suppose Joseph secured the favor of Potiphar?
8. Is it probable that he would ever sacrifice any of his convictions for the sake of making friends?
9. Need we sacrifice convictions in order to have friends?
10. Is it wrong to grow in favor with men? See Luke 2: 52.
11. What was Joseph's adverse reward for virtue?
12. Tell the story of Joseph's prison life and how he made his prison life a school and an opportunity.
13. Tell the story of his life as prime minister of Egypt?
14. Do you see anything censurable in his administration of public affairs?
15. Tell some of the most commendable of Joseph's traits of character.
16. What weaknesses in his character do you discern?
17. In what ways did consciousness of God have to do in determining Joseph's character?
18. Mention five other young men of the Bible, who, through adverse circumstances, rose to positions of influence and made their lives a blessing to the world?
19. Which of these was greatest of all, and why?
20. Mention two or more young men of secular history whose characters and experiences have some things in common with the character and experience of Joseph.

NINTH STUDY

THE MORAL AND RELIGIOUS WORTH OF GENESIS

Every scripture inspired of God is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, furnished completely unto every good work. 2 Tim. 3: 16.

THE BOOK OF GENESIS IS PROFITABLE

I. BECAUSE OF ITS DOCTRINE OF GOD.

1. God, and not gods, is the Creator and the Ruler of the universe. The conception of God implies that this is not a world of chance, of fate, or anarchy, but a world of order; that back of the universe is a principle of unity, and that order and law prevail everywhere.

2. The Genesis teaching concerning God does not pertain to the idea of a mere tribal deity, but to a God of the universe. "God created the heavens and the earth." He is at times spoken of as especially "the God of Shem, of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob," but this is because these men are especially ready to acknowledge and obey Him. But He is also "God Almighty" (17:1), and "Judge of all the earth" (18:25). See also 12:17; 20: 3-8; 14: 8-20. Repeatedly it is stated to be His purpose that all the nations of the earth shall be blessed. See 12: 3; 22: 18; 26: 4. The God of Genesis is clearly the Friend of all people. He is conceived as being omnipotent and omnipresent. "Thou God seest me" was an abiding thought in the Hebrew mind. See Ps. 139.

3. This idea of God is the most powerful influence for good that can operate upon and in the lives of men and women. It restrains from evil and incites to righteous and noble effort. It is the explanation of the greatness of the Hebrew people.

THE BOOK OF GENESIS IS PROFITABLE

II. BECAUSE OF ITS DOCTRINE OF MAN.

1. Man is the image of God, and the crowning glory of creation. He is to have dominion. He is to have communion and fellowship with God. And God is to use him in making the world what it ought to be: 12: 3; 22: 18; 26: 4. All men are created equal, and all are to render service to the full extent of their ability. The high ideal for man is the attainment of perfection. "Walk before me, and be thou perfect" (17: 1.) This means that man is to achieve the highest results that it is possible for him to do. He is to do his best. He is to go on to maturity. And if at times, he fails, God still cares for him and will not only give him another chance if he will repent, but will Himself help him by His providential care. This will bring out of man the best there is in him. This doctrine of the dignity and worth of man; of his call to be a co-worker with God in bringing blessing upon his fellow-man—a call to high service; and of the equality of all men in the sight of God, has great moral and religious worth. Rightly conceived by man it gives him the highest self-respect, restraining from wrong doing and prompting to noble achievement.

THE BOOK OF GENESIS IS PROFITABLE

III. BECAUSE OF ITS DOCTRINE OF SIN.

In Genesis, sin is not conceived of as being a little and unimportant thing; nor is it conceived as pertaining to mere outward conduct. But it is represented as

springing from the heart and as bringing about separation from God, and resulting in other sins of increasing number and magnitude. Sin is portrayed in all its ugliness and awful consequences. As we look upon it, we are not attracted to it, but its repulsiveness is made prominent. We clearly see that the way of the transgressor is hard, and that persistence in sin is sure to result in death. We also see clearly that sin is a social evil—that no man can sin to himself; that sin not only brings suffering, and perhaps death, upon the doer of evil, but also upon others—often upon innocent parties.

THE BOOK OF GENESIS IS PROFITABLE

IV. BECAUSE OF ITS DOCTRINE OF SALVATION.

We must readily concede that the way of salvation is only dimly conceived in Genesis, especially when seen in the fuller light of New Testament teaching. But this Genesis doctrine of salvation is as high as the heavens above any contemporary teaching on that subject. There we see that while evil is tremendous in its influence, it can nevertheless be overcome; that while evil may bruise the heel of man, it cannot bruise his head unless the head gets down where the heels ought to be. And we see that evil may and will be overcome. The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head. This is glorious optimism, — rightly called the first Messianic prophecy. The fifteenth verse of the third chapter is the germinal truth that runs through the whole Bible and culminates in the Book of Revelation. In all ages there shall be men and women who will not bow the knee to the power of evil. Satan shall be cast into the bottomless pit. And the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Such is the germinal truth that is found in Genesis. Moreover, we find God at work in the

world, rejecting the Cainites, notwithstanding their cleverness in building up a great material civilization, and selecting men and women of character and faith to be the media of the salvation that He will give to the world. In other words, we see in Genesis the beginning of the church of the living God, and it is interesting and profitable to notice that not the mighty and the great, but the man who is humble and willing to walk with God—whosoever is pure in heart and noble in purpose and aspiration, and ready to obey and honor God, is recognized as being citizen of this incipient kingdom of God.

In brief, we may say that in Genesis we have glimpses of Christ and His church already at work in behalf of sinful man.

THE BOOK OF GENESIS IS PROFITABLE

V. BECAUSE OF ITS CONCRETE ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE RESULTS OF EVIL, AND OF THE FRUITAGE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Genesis does not consist of abstract statements about good and evil. Moral precepts are not without power. Especially are they influential when beautifully and strikingly expressed. But precepts, however true and however forcibly uttered, do not have enough moral power to make them creative of character. They cannot take hold of the lives of men and women in a transforming way. "Truth must be incarnated in a just representative" in order to be powerful enough to overcome human frailty and human depravity. "Truth has not in itself a propelling power commensurate to the resistance it meets in human nature; wisdom is no match for passion. Truth must come to men, weighted and charged with an outside energy; and the only truth that men universally heed is the power of God."

All the weaknesses and all the sins that pertain to

the life of Lot, or Esau, or Jacob, if described abstractly, could not exert a thousandth part of the warning against sin that they do when portrayed in the concrete form in which they are given in Genesis. Portrayed as they are, without any gilding to make them fascinating, these weaknesses and sins are tremendous in causing a revulsion of feeling against sin. And all the virtues and beauties in the life of an Abraham, a regenerated Jacob, or a Joseph, if only abstractly described, even with poetic beauty, could not exert a thousandth part of the influence that they do in the concrete form in which the Genesis narratives give them. We cannot contemplate the grandeur of these characters in an intelligent and sympathetic way without approving and admiring them; nor without more or less of a feeling that this is the kind of a character we ought to strive to attain. Hence we may see why the Bible abounds in concrete teaching, giving vivid portrayal of some who yield to temptation and are overcome by sin, and of others who resist temptation and triumph over evil.

And here we may see the great value of facts about life as it is and as it ought to be, over mere statements of scientific, or historic truth. Why did not Moses, in his efforts to make a holy nation of these three million people, receive a revelation of scientific and historic truth? Why did he not tell them that the earth is round, and that it is ninety-five million miles from the earth to the sun? Why did he not tell them that the earth revolves around the sun, and that its axis is inclined $23\frac{1}{2}$ degrees toward the plane of its orbit. Why did he not tell them exactly where and how Cain got his wife, how the earth came into existence, and how long ago? Why did he not give them exact information about the past and the present condition of all the great nations and

civilizations of the world? Manifestly because such information would have no moral and religious value. Some of his people might be curious to know the answers to such questions, but none of them would be in any degree lifted out of their sensualism by gaining such information.

Further Thoughts Concerning the Moral and Religious Worth of Genesis

1. The teaching of Genesis had a large part in the nurturing of the Hebrew people, and in making them the greatest moral and religious people of the world.

2. Genesis recognizes the importance of the home as a fundamental educational institution. 18: 19

3. Jesus sanctioned Genesis when He sanctioned the Old Testament as coming from God, and when He said of the Scriptures: "These are they that bear witness of me" (John 5: 39).

4. The worth of Genesis is especially seen in its recognition of marriage as a divine institution, and as meaning the joining of one man and one woman in life-long and holy wedlock.

QUESTIONS

1. Quote 2 Tim. 3: 16.
2. For what four things is Scripture inspired of God profitable?
3. What does it say is the purpose of Scripture inspired of God?
4. What is the first great doctrine set forth in the book of Genesis, and why is this doctrine profitable?
5. What is the second great doctrine of the book of Genesis, and why is this doctrine profitable?
6. What is the third great doctrine of the book of Genesis, and why is it profitable?
7. What is the fourth great doctrine of the book of Genesis, and why is it profitable?
8. What is the advantage of concrete over abstract presentation of truth in things upon life and character?
9. What are some of the concrete presentations of truth that are found in Genesis?
10. Why should not scientific or mere historical facts be given in the Bible?
11. What is the teaching of Genesis in regard to marriage?
12. What is the teaching of Genesis in regard to the home?

TENTH STUDY

GOD'S CHOICE AND TRAINING OF THE HEBREW PEOPLE

I. THREE NAMES ARE APPLIED TO THE CHOSEN PEOPLE.

1. They are first known as Hebrews. This is the oldest designation of the chosen people as a people distinguished from other people. See Gen. 14: 13; 39: 14, 17; 40: 15; 41: 12. The name occurs several times in other books of the Bible. The origin and primitive meaning of the word are not certainly known. See Bible Dictionary.

2. Israel is a name applied to the descendants of Jacob. See Gen. 32: 22-32; 34: 7; 43: 6, 8, 11. The term is less comprehensive than the word Hebrew, as it excludes the descendants of Ishmael and Esau. The name Israel (Ex. 3: 16) came to be applied to the twelve tribes collectively.

3. The word Jew is a still later word and applies, when strictly used, to persons belonging to the tribe of Judah. It seems not to have been used until the kingdom of Judah was the one remaining Hebrew kingdom. See 2 Kings, 16: 6; 25: 25. Later the meaning was extended to include any one of the Hebrew race who returned from captivity; and still later it came to mean any Hebrew wherever he may dwell, and even to include proselytes to Judaism.

II. THE GENEALOGY OF GENESIS.

The records of genealogy in Genesis have a moral and religious significance. They clearly indicate that failure to recognize God leads to sin and that sin leads

to suffering and to death, They also show that recognition of God leads to the highest manhood and that men of God are the salt of the earth. They afford an interesting and a profitable study in heredity. The following by Dr. A. E. Winship, editor of the Journal of Education (Boston), shows that genealogical tables are not without interest and worth:

"The father of Jonathan Edwards was a minister, and his mother was the daughter of a clergyman. Among the more than three hundred college graduates of the Edwards family there were fourteen presidents of colleges, more than one hundred college professors, more than one hundred lawyers, thirty judges, sixty physicians, more than a hundred clergymen, missionaries, and theological professors, and about sixty authors, who have produced 135 books and edited journals and periodicals. There is scarcely any great American industry that has not had one of his family among its chief promoters. These eloquent figures may be said to represent the product of an American Christian family, reared under the most favorable conditions. The contrast is presented in the story of the Jukes family, a family which could not be made to study and would not work. Their entire record is one of pauperism and crime, insanity and imbecility. Among the descendants 310 were professional paupers, 400 were physically wrecked by their own wickedness, sixty were habitual thieves, 130 were convicted criminals, only twenty out of 1,200 descendants learned a trade (and ten of those learned it in the State prison), and worse than all, this notorious family produced seven murderers."

III. GOD'S METHOD OF REJECTION AND SELECTION.

A study of Genesis shows us that God makes use only of those who are morally the fittest in establishing

his kingdom on earth. First of all we see that the atheistic Cainites (4:16-24), notwithstanding the material prosperity and their aptitude for industrial pursuits, are not chosen to be a blessing to all the nations of the earth. But the Sethites, who call upon God are the hope of the world. Through them are to come Noah, Abraham, David, and Jesus. Then we find all antediluvians rejected and only Noah and his family are chosen to perpetuate the race. And this is done because all others save Noah and his family were moral degenerates, while "Noah was a righteous man and perfect in his generation" (6: 9b). This means that Noah did the best he could to overcome the evil within his own nature and to overcome the evil of others. Later it is indicated that the promised victory over evil (Gen. 3:15) is to come to the world through the posterity of Shem. Then beginning with the twelfth chapter of Genesis the choice of Abraham to become the father of the faithful is clearly stated. His seed are to be the salt of the earth. A little later we see Ishmael rejected and Isaac chosen, and finally come the rejection of Esau and the choice of Jacob as the founder of the Hebrew nation. It is through this nation that God will bless all the nations of the earth. The closing chapters of Genesis show us that Jacob chose Judah as the tribe that should be the line of Messianic promise.

The Bible Doctrine of Foreordination and Election

What has been said about God's method of rejection and selection raises the much debated theological question of foreordination and election. With the theological consideration of this question we do not attempt to deal. But it is needful to consider the Bible teaching on these subjects.

The Bible no where teaches that God foreordains some of His children to eternal happiness and others to eternal perdition. We cannot conceive that a wise and loving father or mother would foreordain some of their children to cultured happiness and usefulness, and others to misery and to be a menace to society. Wise and loving parents foreordain *all* their children to usefulness and happiness. But sometimes a child refuses to accord with this parental ideal and by rebelling against it, is lost to what it might otherwise be. Just so God foreordains all his children to be holy and without blemish before Him; but some refuse to accord with God's loving purpose for them and are lost. This may be called the Bible doctrine of general or universal election. All are called to realize their highest possibilities. Whosoever will may come. God so loved the world,—*all* people in the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son.

But the Bible also teaches the doctrine of special election,—the doctrine that all persons are called, *but each to that kind of service for which he is best qualified*. Thus Abraham was called to be the father of the chosen people, not because God loved him more than he loved others, but because he was the best fitted man in the world to fill that position. And Jacob was called to be the founder of the Israelites as a nation, not because God loved him more than he loved Esau, but because Jacob was best fitted to be the father of such a people. But this does not mean that Jacob must go to eternal happiness and Esau to eternal misery. If Jacob had not overcome his evil tendencies, he might have been lost in spite of his special call; and if Esau, after having repented of his sins, had lived the best life he could, he would, according to the Bible, be a saved man.

It was in this sense that the Hebrew people were called of God to give the world the highest and best religion, and thus to be a blessing to all nations. They might do this and still, as individuals, forfeit their heritage of eternal happiness. In the same sense the Greeks were a chosen people to give the world its highest expression of art and philosophy, and the Romans to give the world the highest expression of political organization. In this sense, our own country is an elect nation, called of God to be a blessing to all the nations of the world by contributing those things—such as free institutions, free education, high ideals, material prosperity,—that it is most capable of producing. So, too, every other nation of the world, as England, Germany, France, etc., is especially called of God to do what it is most capable of doing toward making the world what it ought to be. And this holds for individuals as well as for nations. Some of us have to take very humble places in the world's work, but we are to fill these humble places as the call of God. Some are called to positions of honor and trust. But they are not to use those positions for selfish purposes, but for the good of the world, and whatever our field of service may be, whether very low, or very high, we are all equal before God. This is the Bible doctrine of election, clearly indicated in Genesis, and fully wrought out and enforced throughout the Bible.

IV. ISRAEL AT SCHOOL IN EGYPT.

It was not by accident that Israel was transplanted in Egypt. This was clearly the conviction of Joseph (45:5-8), but he did not realize the significance of that fact as we can now understand it. If all nations of the earth are to be blessed through Israel, then Israel must be a trained people. And a people with such a mission

must be trained in the best school of the world. Egypt was that school. It was clearly God's purpose that the chosen people should be trained in the culture and civilization of that country.

1. Politically, Egypt had great lessons to teach. It was "the best administered state of the ancient world." It would be worth much to the chosen people, who were to become a holy *nation* (Ex. 19: 6) to be trained in the political ideals and customs of Egypt.

2. The industries of Egypt, including agriculture, manufacture, architecture, engineering, etc., were highly developed. The nation that is to be a blessing to all the nations of the earth must be trained in industrial pursuits, even though that may not be the field in which its greatest blessing to the world is to be made.

3. The Egyptians had a great literature and great schools. They had made progress in intellectual culture and in professional efficiency. "Intellectually, the Egyptians take high rank Their minds possessed much subtlety and acuteness; they were fond of literary composition; they made great advances in most of the arts and sciences and were in every department of life intelligent and ingenious. It is astonishing what an extensive literature they possessed at a very early date—books on religion, or morals, law, rhetoric, arithmetic, mensuration, geometry, medicine, books of travels, and, above all, novels! There were many poems also. . . . Egypt is said to have stimulated Greek speculation by some of its doctrines."

Israel would certainly receive much good from living in the midst of this stimulating intellectual activity.

4. "In art, the power which the Egyptians exhibited was still greater than in thought." In architecture in particular, there "was art of a very high order."

Ferguson in his History of Art says, that the Hall in Kanak "is the noblest effort of architectural magnificence ever produced by the hand of man." And Ranke says that in Egypt we find "the dawn of artistic development for the whole human race." In the light of these facts, we may understand how the Israelites came to be able to build the tabernacle and the temple with such true and impressive magnificence.

5. The religion of Egypt was polytheism, and the Egyptians were not without many wrong conceptions concerning religion and morals. But they had a deep seated religious sense. They were reverent and earnest. Some of their doctrines and religious practices were approximately good. In such an environment the religious life of the Hebrew people would not be in danger of dying out, and they may have received conceptions of doctrine and of worship that enabled God more fully to reveal Himself to them.

Thus we see what some of the advantages to Israel would be in this first experience of schooling in a foreign country. Later they were sent to school to be trained by the Babylonians, the Persians, the Greeks, and the Romans. It is thus that God lays under tribute the powers that be, as a means of attaining His purpose for the world.

"It would be against the analogy of the whole history, to suppose that this long period was wasted in its effect on the mind of the Chosen People; that the same Divine Providence which in later times drew new truths out of the Chaldaean captivity for the Jewish Church, out of the Grecian philosophy and the Roman law for the Christian Church, should have made no use of the greatness of Egypt in this first and most important stage of the education of Israel.

"We need not go to heathen records for the assurance that Moses was 'learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians.' Whatever that wisdom was, we cannot doubt it was turned to its own

good purpose in the laws through him revealed to the people of God. The very minuteness of the law implies a stage of existence different from that in which the Patriarchs had lived, but like to that in which we know that the Egyptians lived. The forms of some of the most solemn sacrifices—as, for example, the scapegoat—are almost identical. Circumcision, the abstinence from swine's flesh, the division of time by weeks, of the day from sunset to sunset, were the same in each nation, though by each probably derived from a common source. The white linen dresses of the priests, the Urim and Thummin on the high-priest's breastplate, are, to all appearance, derived from the same source as the analogous emblems amongst the Egyptians. The sacred ark, as portrayed on the monuments, can hardly fail to have some relation to that which was borne by the Levites at the head of the host, and which was finally enshrined in the Temple. The Temple, at least in some of its most remarkable features,—its courts, its successive chambers, and its adytum, or Holy of Holies,—is more like those of Egypt than others of the ancient world with which we are acquainted. In these and in many other instances we may fairly trace a true affiliation of such outward customs and forms as in like manner, at a later period, the Christian Church took from the Pagan ritual of the empire in which it had sojourned for its four hundred years. It is but an expansion of the one fact which has always arrested the attention of commentators, and which in its widest sense is a salutary warning against despising the greatness and the wisdom of the heathen.”—*Stanley, Hist. Jewish Church, I. pp. 86-87.*

The Educational Value of Egyptian Oppression of Israel

Although not recorded in Genesis, it is worth while to recognize here that the oppression of Israel by the Egyptians was valuable as a part of their preparation for national life.

1. This oppression did much toward overcoming tribal jealousies and antipathies, and toward fusing the tribes into a united people. In this respect the Egyptian oppression did for the Twelve Tribes much the same that English oppression did for our thirteen colonies.

2. The oppression made it possible for them to sympathize with other people who are oppressed. Thus the Hebrew nation would be more ready to champion the cause of any person or nation that was oppressed, and to treat foreigners with mercy and love.

God's Great Commission to the Twelve Tribes

Ch. 49.

1. Israel came into Egypt as a family. They are to leave Egypt as a nation, and to be transplanted in Canaan—there to be more thoroughly trained in holiness.

2. The great problem is how to get these rude tribes to recognize what God's purpose for them is, and to be willing to do their part in realizing that purpose.

3. To this end God speaks to the Tribes through the dying patriarch Jacob. Certainly they ought to be impressed by this last message from their illustrious father.

QUESTIONS

1. What three names are applied in the Bible to the chosen people?
2. What value attaches to the genealogy outlined in Genesis?
3. What illustration is given to show that genealogy is not without interest and worth?
4. What are the different steps in God's method of rejection and selection, as shown in Genesis?
5. What can you say about the Bible doctrine of foreordination and election?
6. Have you ever realized that God calls you to do a special work for the good of the world?
7. Why can we say that God sent Israel to school in Egypt?
8. What are some of the ways whereby the Israelites would be benefitted by the sojourn in Egypt?
9. How would the oppression in Egypt tend to fit the Israelites for national life?
10. What can you say of God's great commission to the twelve tribes?

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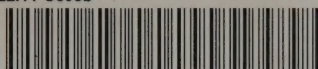
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